TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS REPORT

JUNE 2024

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A worker handles paper bags at a recycling factory. Without worker protections or protective gear, workers may be exposed to highly toxic substances that can have profound health effects.

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A fisherman with his catch. Identifying victims of trafficking in the commercial fishing sector industry can be especially difficult as fishing vessels are out to sea for months at a time.

MESSAGE FROM **THE SECRETARY OF STATE**

Dear Reader:

Human trafficking is a stain on the conscience of our society. It fuels crime, corruption, and violence. It distorts our economies and harms our workers. And it violates the fundamental right of all people to be free.

Around the globe, an estimated 27 million people are exploited for labor, services, and commercial sex. Through force, fraud, and coercion, they are made to toil in fields and factories, in restaurants and residences. Traffickers prey on some of the world's most marginalized and vulnerable individuals – profiting from their plight.

The State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons Report provides the world's most comprehensive assessment of this abhorrent practice, as well as efforts by governments and stakeholders around the globe to combat it. By measuring progress in 188 countries – including the United States – we are advancing President Biden's commitment to prevent trafficking, prosecute perpetrators, and protect survivors.

Even as this resource covers long-standing forms and methods of trafficking, it also examines the growing role of technology in both facilitating exploitation and countering it.

Digital tools have amplified the reach, scale, and speed of trafficking. Perpetrators use dating apps and online ads to recruit victims. They use online platforms to sell illicit sexual content. They leverage encrypted messaging and digital currencies to evade detection.

At the same time, technology is also one of our most powerful tools to combat this enduring scourge. Mobile phones, social media platforms, and artificial intelligence make it possible for advocates and law enforcement to raise greater awareness about the rights of workers and migrants, locate victims and perpetrators of online sexual exploitation, and analyze large amounts of data to detect emerging human trafficking trends.

As technology makes it easier for traffickers to operate across geographies and jurisdictions, those of us committed to rooting out this horrendous crime – in government, businesses, civil society – can and must work together and coordinate our efforts.

I am grateful to everyone who contributed to this report, especially the State Department's Human Trafficking Expert Consultant Network, who helps ensure our findings and recommendations are informed by those with lived experience of human trafficking.

I also want to recognize our TIP Report Heroes who have been essential partners in this work. For the past 20 years, the Department of State has honored more than 170 such champions of human dignity and decency from over 90 countries – survivors, government leaders, law enforcement officials, lawyers, social workers. Many of them have put their own safety at risk to support victims and share their stories.

The courage and persistence of survivors and advocates like these humble and inspire us all as we continue working to build a safer and more just world.

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Sincerely,

Antony Blinken

Women process and dry chili peppers under the sun. Many women in this industry earn less than USD $1 per day and have limited or no access to markets or finance; they have less bargaining power and limited income.

MESSAGE FROM **THE AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE**

Dear Reader:

Innovation drives successful anti-trafficking work. As criminals continually adapt to take advantage of new vulnerabilities and opportunities to exploit others, we must persistently keep pace with a rapidly evolving trafficking landscape. This year's introduction examines the role of digital technology, which has had a profound impact on trafficking methods and trends in recent years. Traffickers use online platforms to recruit, groom, defraud, coerce, and exploit victims, taking advantage of the potential for anonymity offered by online spaces. At the same time, when harnessed effectively, digital technology can strengthen our anti-trafficking response, providing opportunities for stakeholders to strengthen prevention efforts, protect victims, and partner with survivors and other stakeholders to combat the crime.

In our fight against human trafficking, we must constantly strive to connect and unite through innovation, including optimization of our use of digital technology. Traffickers take advantage of the ever-shifting nature of the internet to exploit others; it is imperative that we too embrace technology to counter this trend. Digital technology has given us new ways to prevent trafficking, protect victims, prosecute bad actors, and forge global partnerships to combat this crime. This year's report highlights a range of successful and promising innovations that set us on that path. Developing partnerships and empowering communities most affected by human trafficking are key to combating this crime. This report examines, for example, how current efforts to prevent and address forced labor are buoyed by strategic partnerships with workers, including worker-led approaches to advancing labor rights and standards.

The internet can provide spaces to share information, for example to train and educate youth regarding online safety, empower workers to know and protect their rights, and educate vulnerable populations to recognize indicators of exploitation. Digital tools can provide human trafficking victims with streamlined access to services such as hotlines, peer support and therapy, and other resources for technical training and financial literacy to help survivors navigate the exit and recovery stages of human trafficking. Technological advances can increase the speed and accuracy of data collection, an area that when harnessed effectively can aid in the identification of trafficking patterns and trends. Stakeholders can use technology to strengthen communication and information-sharing tools that incorporate workers' voices, increase transparency and accountability in supply chains, and streamline collaboration and data-sharing among stakeholders.

This year's introduction also covers a topic of personal importance to me as a former prosecutor. Utilizing strategic investigative processes can effectively shift the burden of proof away from a reliance on victim testimony, which can endanger and retraumatize victims, and onto the prosecuting authority to both strengthen criminal justice procedures and better facilitate the safety and long-term well-being of victims and survivors. Strengthening partnerships with survivors and innovating for greater inclusion of historically marginalized communities such as those with disabilities, are crucial to the anti-trafficking movement. Survivors must continue to be consulted early and often in the development and implementation of anti-trafficking work. Their firsthand knowledge of the ways in which traffickers are utilizing technology for exploitation is critical to ensure effective prevention, protection, and prosecution efforts.

Governments have a responsibility to guide and leverage efforts, including the use of digital technology, to protect the rights and safety of their citizens; however, governments cannot do this alone. Collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders – governments, tech companies, NGOs, survivor communities, and financial institutions – are more important than ever to creating a safer world without human trafficking. A fierce commitment to innovation has the power to renew and strengthen the deep connections that bind together all of us working to end human trafficking. The United States is proud to work alongside our partners at home and overseas as we document and disseminate the efforts being implemented to end this terrible crime while also recognizing the heroes whose work around the globe brings hope to victims, empowerment to marginalized communities, and motivation to continue our collective efforts.

Sincerely,

Cindy Dyer

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"As we work to help people disproportionately affected by human trafficking, including members of racial and ethnic minorities, women and girls, the LGBTQI+ community, and migrants, we remain committed to learning from and partnering with survivors to support their recoveries and to recruit their help in better spotting and preventing these too often overlooked crimes."

President Joseph R. Biden Jr.

Exploring the Role and Impacts of Digital Technology on Human Trafficking

In today's rapidly evolving world, technology is often a double-edged sword. While technology has provided innovative solutions to preventing and addressing human trafficking, it has also prompted complex ethical questions and created new opportunities for criminals, including human traffickers, to be increasingly sophisticated in exploiting individuals for profit. Traffickers use technology to recruit, control, market and exploit vulnerable individuals while also evading detection. Traffickers do this, for example, by using the Internet to advertise and sell children online for sex, advertise false jobs on social media platforms that are actually human trafficking schemes, transfer cryptocurrency to other traffickers, and perpetuate online scam operations. At the same time, anti-trafficking stakeholders are using technological innovations to prevent human trafficking, protect victims, and prosecute traffickers. The 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report (TIP Report) introduction explores the challenges associated with digital technology in the fight against human trafficking and highlights how it can be used effectively by the anti-trafficking community.

Defining "Digital Technology"

Digital technology refers to an ever-expanding set of electronic systems and resources that facilitate learning, communication, entertainment, and more. Examples include hardware, such as computers, smartphones and mobile devices, and robotics; software, including mobile applications, geolocation, online games, financial databases, web-based and cloud-based systems, and artificial intelligence (AI); and other online services, such as websites, video streaming, blogs, and social media. For the purposes of this report, digital technologies are explored through their use by traffickers as well as by key anti-trafficking stakeholders and beneficiaries.

The Intersection between Digital Technology and Human Trafficking

One way digital technology and human trafficking can intersect occurs when traffickers use online platforms to exploit victims. While not a novel phenomenon, renewed attention was brought to the issue because many people shifted their daily activities online at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Reports from several countries demonstrated drastic increases in online commercial sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, including online sexual exploitation of children (OSEC), and demand for and distribution of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Traffickers have continued to advance schemes to exploit individuals using digital tools to groom, deceive, control, and exploit victims. Some of these schemes lure individuals hundreds of miles away, including across borders, while others do not require them to leave their homes. Increasingly, victims and survivors of human trafficking have shared that they first connected with their traffickers online. While traffickers continue to refine and advance their use of digital technologies, governments and other anti-trafficking stakeholders must do the same to combat human trafficking.

Actors recreate a forced cyber scam operation during a law enforcement training. Traffickers use online platforms to recruit, groom, defraud, coerce, and exploit victims.

How Traffickers Use Technology to Facilitate Trafficking

Human traffickers use a wide range of tactics to manipulate and exploit victims—using technology at every stage of their criminal activities, from the initial planning and execution of the scheme to the way in which they coerce, monitor, and maintain individuals to further their exploitative purpose and increase their profits.

Traffickers use the Internet to facilitate the identification and grooming of potential victims. Traffickers often target and victimize individuals in vulnerable situations such as those experiencing conflict, natural disasters, poverty, challenging home lives, systemic oppression, or a combination of hardships. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) identified “hunting” and “fishing” as two common strategies perpetrators use to deceive and recruit victims. According to UNODC, online platforms help traffickers search proactively and anonymously for a specific type of individual who they believe is particularly susceptible to further their scheme (the hunting process), or passively attract potential victims by posting online and waiting for a response (the fishing process). Perpetrators may use social media, online advertisements, websites, dating apps, and gaming platforms – or fraudulent or deceptive duplications of such tools – to hide their true identity through fake accounts and profiles while interacting with potential victims. Once potential victims are identified and contact is established, communication through the Internet serves as a powerful tool to deceive individuals with false promises of education, employment, housing, or romantic relationships only to lure them into labor and sex trafficking situations. For example, a trafficker may create an online business website, perhaps posing as a talent recruiter, on which they often include realistic photos to gain a victim’s trust and make them believe the opportunity is authentic and will help advance their career or improve their life. In these cases, traffickers trick the victim into believing they can legitimately earn income not only for themselves, but for their families as well. As trust is established, the trafficker

A series of three graphic images show a cartoon woman climbing a ladder towards a phone chip, a woman in a hijab using an ipad and a line of computer screens.

manipulates and traps the individual in an exploitative situation through force, fraud, or coercion. Tactics such as threatening physical abuse or harm to an individual, their reputation, future employment, financial prospects, or their loved ones, are used by traffickers to foster fear. The internet can also serve as a platform to escalate the exploitative scheme further, including via sextortion.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) defines sextortion as a serious crime that occurs when a perpetrator threatens to distribute private and sensitive material if the victim does not provide images of a sexual nature, sexual favors, or money. The perpetrator, who often poses as a love interest, entices individuals to send sensitive images, which the victim believes are being shared privately, but the perpetrator then uses the images to control and coerce their victims to produce more images, perform sexual favors, or give money in cases involving sex trafficking or forced labor. In addition to blackmailing the victims for large sums of money, traffickers may also use the content to generate additional revenue by selling the sensitive material on illicit platforms.

Additionally, traffickers can use the Internet to facilitate forced criminality, an increasingly common mechanism involving traffickers coercing their victims to engage in or support criminal activities ranging from working as part of online scam operations to commercial sex. In online scam operations, traffickers largely recruit victims through deceitful job listings online, confine them in gated compounds, and force them to engage in online criminal activity under threat of serious harm. Online scam operations include illegal online gambling, cryptocurrency investment schemes, and romance scams, all of which involve the victim of trafficking forming relationships with individuals in order to defraud them of significant sums. Some traffickers compel victims to continue to work by threatening that if they seek help, they will be prosecuted for the unlawful acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked; while others are simply unaware that they are trafficking victims.

In sum, traffickers use digital tools like the Internet to amplify the reach, scale, and speed of their trafficking operations. While the methods and means may have evolved with technological developments, the exploitation at the heart of trafficking persists, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive and innovative approaches to investigate and combat this crime.

Challenges and Risks Technology Presents for the Anti-trafficking Community

Digital technology has broadened the scope and scale of operations for traffickers as it allows the flexibility to target and exploit victims across the world while remaining hidden and more difficult to trace. Traffickers

"Building consensus around an affirmative vision is the first line of our tech diplomacy. But the rules, the standards, the norms that societies follow are going to determine whether this technology is used for good or whether it's used for ill."

Antony Blinken, Secretary of State

adapt their schemes to take advantage of the obscurity available with new online tools, such as hiding behind anonymization tools or software, and benefiting from loose regulations of online platforms. These challenges make it increasingly difficult for law enforcement and anti-trafficking stakeholders to identify and implement coordinated solutions fast enough to effectively combat technology-facilitated human trafficking. Constant evolution in digital technology and the ways in which it is being used also makes it difficult to concentrate efforts or decipher trafficking indicators on a given platform, because law enforcement agencies must continuously adapt their tactics, develop technical expertise, and collaborate with technology companies to effectively combat trafficking. Additionally, NGOs and service providers with data relevant to the field may struggle with how to effectively share information while considering data ownership and ensuring privacy is being maintained and protected.

Cross-Sector Coordination Challenges

Traffickers have widened their reach by communicating with and recruiting victims globally, which has created a need for greater global coordination among anti-trafficking stakeholders and technology experts. These stakeholders face several challenges to coordinating a global response, including navigating diverse legal frameworks to address technology-facilitated human trafficking that transcends borders. It is often difficult to determine which jurisdiction has authority to investigate and prosecute perpetrators and coordinate international investigation efforts involving multiple countries. Even when the jurisdiction is established, the necessary evidence gathering and coordination often results in lengthier processes, causing further strain on law enforcement agencies. Traffickers also take advantage of and operate with impunity due to gaps, inadequacies, or loopholes in laws and regulations to address technology-facilitated trafficking and associated activities.

The lack of sufficient funding for research and training on traffickers' exploitation of digital tools can leave the anti-trafficking field responding reactively rather than proactively. Capacity and resources are particularly acute challenges for law enforcement in regions with limited access to advanced technology. Several technology-based anti-trafficking tools exist for data mining; however, many regions are unable to take advantage of these resources due to a lack of technological infrastructure and digital literacy. Victims may also find themselves isolated and unable to easily seek help in geographical areas with limited technological capabilities, and poor internet connectivity or coverage may affect their ability to receive information and services from anti-trafficking NGOs in a timely manner.

Data Privacy, Protection, and Access

Data protection, data analysis, and data sharing are crucial methods of using digital technologies to prevent, identify, and reduce instances of human trafficking, but practitioners must consider potential negative effects on the safety and well-being of victims and survivors. Collecting and sharing data on human trafficking cases, including victims' personally identifiable information (PII) can be essential for law enforcement and victim support efforts, but could raise serious data privacy concerns for victims and survivors should their information be inadvertently released to the public through data breaches, which has become a common issue with digital

"I believe history will show that this was the moment when we had the opportunity to lay the groundwork for the future of AI. And the urgency of this moment must then compel us to create a collective vision of what this future must be. A future where AI is used to advance the public interest."

Vice President Kamala Harris

technology in general. NGOs and technology companies often use data mining techniques to support law enforcement in investigating offenses but may lack appropriate security protocols to properly safeguard the data and protect victims' PII from bad actors. Different standards for ensuring data privacy and protections across countries and concerns around national security hinder effective information sharing between governments. Frameworks for data collection, storage, and sharing of personal data are often different, complicating international cooperation. Governments should consider strengthening digital literacy and infrastructure, where possible, to improve data security standards and procedures, while listening to the recommendations from anti-trafficking stakeholders, including those with lived experiences of trafficking, to assess the best mechanisms for gathering, analyzing, and sharing data related to victims and survivors.

Encryption & Anonymity

Encryption systems are one way to safeguard data in digital interactions including in web browsing, messaging apps, and financial transactions. Such systems prevent third parties from accessing data by turning readable data into a scrambled code that can only be recovered by the receiver's system, ensuring that only authorized parties can access the original data. Anonymizing technology provides a high level of privacy and obscures the connection between an individual's online activity and their real identity. Encryption systems found in many online platforms are designed to protect the privacy and security of all online users; however, these systems and anonymizing technologies such as virtual private networks (VPNs), can also offer protection to bad actors, allowing them to avoid detection and accountability.

As with any crime, heightened anonymity may pose a major challenge for law enforcement and anti-trafficking stakeholders in identifying traffickers and their co-conspirators, whether it is the creator of a fraudulent social media account or author of an online advertisement scam. Traffickers increasingly benefit from and rely on the protection that digital tools offer as it amplifies an offender's ability to anonymize themselves through the entire transactional process – from the recruitment and the solicitation to the management of the transactions and relationships to the payment. Virtual currency has even enabled a distance between those making and receiving payments and the movement of the money. Traffickers may also hide their IP addresses and encrypt their communications, such as emails, chat messages, and file transfers. Together this allows greater physical separation between the offender and the offense, impacting the crime itself and law enforcement's ability to intercede.

Media or Misinformation

The proliferation of social media and online forums have increased the potential for false narratives and misinformation about human trafficking to circulate online and skew public perceptions of the crime. Even accurate reporting on human trafficking cases and issues may unintentionally minimize the wide range of potential trafficking experiences. Unfortunately, the most sensationalized and misleading stories tend to attract the most attention and mispresent what human trafficking is while also shifting focus away from more prevalent forms of trafficking and from marginalized populations whose exploitation may not receive the same coverage. Such reports may also create a singular or limited perception within communities of what human trafficking looks like, perpetuating stereotypes and interfering with prevention efforts or victims' ability to self-identify.

Daily wage laborers work at a construction site. In the United States, forced labor in the construction industry can involve both U.S. citizens and foreign nationals, including those who are here on a legal work visa.

The Promise of Technology in Monitoring and Combating Human Trafficking

Technology also plays an important role in investigating and countering human trafficking. Digital technology, including mobile applications, social media campaigns, and online hubs, can be used to further share information, resources, and training on human trafficking. It can also be used to improve access to online support services for victims, survivors, and vulnerable populations. Organizations are using data analytic tools to help identify current trends in fraudulent recruitment, map complex supply chains for links to forced labor, and detect emerging human trafficking schemes. These tools help support information sharing used to bolster identification, investigation, and prosecution efforts by providing means to integrate and analyze data from multiple sources.

Enhancing Education and Outreach Efforts

Digital technology and literacy expand the reach of prevention efforts to raise awareness and educate the public on human trafficking globally. Given the increase in online activity among children, governments and parents should even further prioritize education around online safety for children and youth, and could take advantage of online tools to inform children of the risks related to the internet. Fortunately, there are already a number of beneficial training tools for young people using social media and mobile applications, as well as for parents and guardians, that help support early interventions to prevent technology-facilitated trafficking of youth. One example of how technology is being used for public awareness is through online campaigns including the *Can You See Me?* campaign administered by A21, a global anti-trafficking organization in the United States, aimed at informing the general public on how to spot signs of human trafficking and where to report it.

"Traffickers prey on the marginalized and most vulnerable. But we are witnessing an emerging trend where the demographic profile of trafficking victims is also expanding, at pace with the digital developments in which we are living."

Dr. Kari Johnstone, OSCE Special Representative and Coordinator for Combating Human Trafficking

Technology is also being used to improve awareness and outreach efforts to support worker engagement and empowerment. Commonly used messaging apps and social media platforms, as well as specially designed worker engagement and empowerment platforms, are used to educate workers on their labor rights, including the right to organize; access legal and social services; and connect with legitimate employers and jobs. Some tools also offer responsible employment training for managers, provide secure grievance mechanisms for workers, aggregate worker survey responses, and provide feedback opportunities, allowing workers to share information about their recruitment and work experiences. One promising example comes from Polaris, an NGO based in the United States. Through its Nonechka project, Polaris collaborated with technology partner Ulula on a platform that allows farmworkers in Mexico and now in the United States to share their experiences, including information on risky recruitment and employment processes. This information also helps Polaris formulate prevention strategies, as well as inform workers about their rights, wages, and working conditions and how to access general services locally including emergency, transitional, or long-term services.

Victim Services

Digital technology tools can aid victims during the exit and recovery phases of a human trafficking experience. Technology can play a pivotal role in victim identification, employing various methods and platforms for finding victims online and allowing for self-reporting exploitation. For example, the Canadian NGO Center for Child Protection (C3P) operates *Project Arachnid*, a web crawler that searches for known CSAM. When such material is detected, C3P sends a notice to the provider asking that the material be removed. The NGO Thorn also has an AI-powered tool that detects CSAM and tools that aid law enforcement in child sex trafficking investigations. While digital investigative techniques, including those that make use of AI, can assist in trafficking detection, investigation, and successful prosecutions, basic communication tools such as messaging apps, SMS and text, and phone channels also offer lower-tech and straightforward avenues for victims to communicate with service providers in real time. Successful tools to advance victim services include those that facilitate and increase access to victim resource hotlines, virtual peer community spaces, and financial inclusion resources. There are also online tools to bolster training and technical assistance for professionals who wish to support victims and survivors during the aftermath of victimization and to navigate the criminal justice system. Most of these tools are mobile applications and leverage web- and cloud-based solutions for victim services. The GraceCity App, for example, developed by anti-trafficking advocates in Sacramento, California, is a mobile application that offers victims and survivors details on the community resources in their area. The app can canvass thousands of first responders and provide users with useful resources including nearby NGOs, medical professionals, social workers, and therapists. Technologically enhanced interventions can be instrumental in overcoming challenges to victim identification, outreach, and intervention, providing real-time communication channels that are accessible, secure, and more efficient in providing immediate assistance tailored to the individual's situation and unique needs.

Data Collection and Sharing Efforts

As mentioned earlier, data collection, data analysis, and data sharing are crucial components of using digital technologies to prevent, identify, and reduce instances of human trafficking. Anti-trafficking stakeholders have created tools and established new initiatives to improve their data collection and sharing to support investigation and prosecution efforts. For example, social media and communication platforms are rich sources of information for law enforcement investigations, but combing through large-scale datasets can be time consuming and labor intensive. A diverse group of stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, civil society organizations, private sector businesses, and information technology professionals developed technology tools to assist in anti-trafficking efforts. These tools help anti-trafficking stakeholders collect and analyze vast amounts of qualitative and quantitative data through techniques such as data mining, machine learning, and natural language processing. These digital tools not only enhance the utility and speed of traditional data collection methods used for case management and investigative purposes, but also make it easier for anti-trafficking actors to analyze the data to share real-time insights that better equip the field to address and combat trafficking. Despite this potential, reports show that NGOs have traditionally underutilized such tools due to lack of knowledge, access, expertise, and funding, and more information is needed to better understand barriers to use.

Anti-trafficking applications can help investigators perform pattern analyses from big-data searches encompassing structured and unstructured data from sources including social media. These analyses allow investigators to understand traffickers' online activities as well as their most frequently used platforms and profiles used to target and mislead victims. For example, the Counter Trafficking Data Collaborative (CTDC), developed by the International Organization for Migration, brings together anti-trafficking organizations from around the world to

An employee at a factory assembles construction equipment. Civil society and unions play important roles in reporting and advocating for workers, while the private sector must conduct due diligence to ensure their goods are not made with forced labor. Governments also bear responsibility to closely monitor their own procurement, protect workers' rights, and hold violators accountable.

make human trafficking data publicly available in a central, accessible online platform. The goal of CTDC is to break down information sharing barriers and equip the anti-trafficking community with reliable data. CTDC offers primary, individual-level data scrubbed of personally identifiable information on victims of human trafficking that can be used to track human trafficking trends globally.

From identifying trafficking patterns to increasing accountability within supply chains to prevent forced labor, the multifaceted nature of data collection and sharing requires multidisciplinary partnerships for the benefits of data-related solutions to fully materialize. Data collection and sharing among several anti-trafficking stakeholders is key to effectively developing anti-trafficking policies, identifying victims, prosecuting the perpetrators, and mapping where and how traffickers and transnational criminal networks operate. Collaboration on data collection and sharing should particularly be encouraged between sectors and stakeholders equipped with capabilities to collect data and gather intelligence and insights. Such stakeholders should include NGOs, survivor-led organizations, individuals with lived experience of human trafficking, and intelligence or investigative agencies. The Traffik Analysis Hub is another example of a global solution that supports joint analysis of large AI-generated data sets, providing partners with the ability to pool data assets to generate new insights into patterns and hotspots of trafficking incidents. Information from the Traffik Analysis Hub, which was developed with the support of IBM, is also shared with law enforcement so actions can be taken to disrupt trafficking operations. The ability to use large quantities of data and data analytics also helps to minimize the use of individual victim information and victim testimony to support trafficking prosecutions.

However, the collection and analysis of large data sets present several significant risks and challenges including privacy and data security concerns, misuse of data, and bias and inaccuracies that could result from reliance on large data collections. To mitigate these risks, it is crucial to implement data protection measures to ensure ethical data collection practices and protect individual's right to privacy.

Lessons Learned and Looking Ahead

The Role of Government

Governments have the responsibility to regulate the use of technology, including in anti-trafficking efforts, such as disincentivizing the abuse of online resources for trafficking. Efforts to legislate and regulate tech companies to better prevent and address human trafficking will have broader impacts in areas such as privacy, security, and innovation, so careful consideration with a wide range of stakeholders will be needed.

Right now, government approaches to addressing emerging issues in the digital era continue to be fragmented, in part due to the scale and speed at which digital technology evolves. Inconsistent policies make it difficult to combat tech-facilitated crimes due to their transnational and multi-jurisdictional elements. Some governments are recognizing the importance of regulating digital platforms to protect and further national security, economic development, and human rights priorities and many have begun developing policies around the production, deployment, and use of digital technologies. Collaboration and coordination at the international and national level will make it harder for perpetrators to continue their illicit activities.

Globally, government investment in digital technologies for anti-trafficking efforts remains low, despite significant potential. Private sector and civil society stakeholders, including those with lived experience, will be critical to identifying additional government-funded research and development necessary to channel the positive aspects of technology and protect those who use it. An OSCE and Tech Against Trafficking analysis found that out of 305 technology tools readily available to combat human trafficking, only 9 percent were developed through government investments. Consideration should also be given as to how best to develop and share existing tech tools in regions of the world that lack such tools.

The Role of Law Enforcement

Law enforcement agencies are tasked with combating technology-facilitated human trafficking by monitoring online platforms, investigating suspicious activity, and prosecuting perpetrators. Law enforcement agencies can continuously look for new ways to proactively investigate trafficking cases by harnessing technological innovations to collect evidentiary material. For proactive investigations, agencies can focus on increasing internal capacity to integrate data analytics and artificial intelligence tools into casework, as well as collaborate and coordinate with NGOs and technology companies in tool development, training, and information sharing - with due regard to privacy safeguards.

Law enforcement agencies have found ways to leverage technology to help identify, track, and monitor illicit activity by following its digital footprint. A digital footprint could include online activity, from websites visited to social media posts published, and can help paint a clearer picture of a trafficker's identity, location, and criminal activity. Such publicly available digital evidence is often helpful in building a trafficking case.

Examples of law enforcement leveraging online data to support criminal investigations include:

- In September 2023, The Netherlands, supported by EUROPOL, coordinated a 3-day investigation targeting online criminal activities that enable human trafficking. Law enforcement from 26 countries alongside representatives from European Labor Authority, European Police College (CEPOL), INTERPOL, OSCE, and International Justice Mission, focused on identifying online platforms and social media to recruit victims for sexual and labor exploitation. This led to identifying 11 suspected human traffickers and 45 potential victims.
- In 2023, Operation Synergia led by INTERPOL, targeted human trafficking rings linked to cyber scam centers. Partnering with a leading creator of cybersecurity technology, Group-IB's Threat Intelligence and High-Tech Crime Investigation teams collected and shared information with INTERPOL and other law enforcement agencies to locate over 2,400 IP addresses associated with cybercrime, leading to the removal of the servers. Over 60 law enforcement agencies from 50 countries participated in the search and seizure of 1,300 malicious servers and electronic devices, shutting down 70 percent of identified cybercrime command servers while the remaining 30 percent are under investigation.

Law enforcement agencies must be better resourced to combat technology-facilitated human trafficking or use technology for human trafficking investigations. This can be achieved through greater investment in staff, training, and software. Law enforcement officers must be trained on monitoring and evaluating online platforms and developing technical knowledge. Law enforcement agencies can deepen their capabilities by establishing cybercrime units tasked with data analysis and decryption technology. Cooperation protocols with NGO and private sector partners will further data sharing and the design and deployment of new tools that are victim-centric and trauma- and survivor-informed. Multilateral knowledge exchange should also be considered when developing technology tools to prevent traffickers from exploiting the gaps in capacity and legislation between law enforcement agencies. Governments should also focus on implementation of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children to address legislation gaps. Lastly, law enforcement agencies with access to victims' personal data must have protection standards in place on the collection and storage of such personal data.

The Role of the Financial Sector

The financial sector also plays a vital role in combating human trafficking. According to the International Labour Organization, human trafficking is responsible for an estimated $236 billion in illicit profits annually. All forms of currency, including both traditional and digital assets (e.g. cryptocurrency), can be laundered, requiring a multidimensional approach involving legislative measures, collaboration between justice and financial sectors, technological innovations, and ethical considerations to detect their use in criminal enterprises. The financial sector's role extends beyond upholding regulatory frameworks, often guided by promising practices in the area

of corporate responsibility. As illicit proceeds from human trafficking can intersect with formal financial systems at any stage of a human trafficking crime, it is essential that financial institutions proactively manage the risk of technology-facilitated human trafficking and train staff on the financial indicators and techniques used by human traffickers to launder money. Coordination in this area should also include financial institutions working with law enforcement, technology companies, and survivors to inform their efforts, including on the development of training programs to enhance the ability of frontline staff and other industry professionals to detect transactions connected to human trafficking, how and when to intervene, and how to determine when a third party is benefitting from the exploitation of another.

Globally, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is the standard-setting body for anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism and weapons proliferation. More than 200 countries have agreed to implement FATF recommendations, which provide guidance for member countries to identify, assess, and understand money laundering and illicit finance risks and to mitigate those risks. Since 2019, the FATF has included guidance on how to assess and mitigate risks associated with digital assets and digital asset service providers, including recommendations on how member jurisdictions should regulate cryptocurrency transactions. Countries are encouraged to adapt FATF recommendations to their specific context to establish or enhance efforts to tackle illicit financial transactions.

Following digital financial transactions human traffickers leave behind can identify broader criminal networks and make it more difficult to profit from human trafficking. For this reason, responsible innovation in technology and proactive partnerships between governments, financial institutions, law enforcement, and civil society experts, including those with lived experiences are an important part of identifying illicit financial activity associated with human trafficking and safeguarding financial systems against human trafficking, money laundering, terrorist financing, and other serious financial crimes.

The Role of NGOs

NGOs are one of the primary users and drivers of the development of anti-trafficking technological tools, algorithms, and programs and use digital technology to provide survivors easier access to resources and support services such as online counseling and helplines. NGOs are also well-positioned to build strong partnerships with and bridge the gap between technology companies, governments, survivors, and community organizations to enhance the creation and broaden the use of essential anti-trafficking application services. NGOs can use these relationships to advocate for and consult on the creation of standardized response frameworks, data privacy for victims when using anti-trafficking technology tools, and solutions to other emerging concerns around technology.

A result of a partnership between NGOs and international organizations (IOs) to advance work under the UN's Global Compact on Decent Work in Global Supply Chains, the *Interactive Map for Businesses of Anti-Human Trafficking Organizations* was developed to be a user-friendly repository database that tracks global and local initiatives and organizations that businesses can partner with on anti-trafficking efforts. The map provides NGOs an opportunity to optimize coordination, research, awareness, and prevention efforts through the ability to identify specific industry initiatives to combat human trafficking via a filter tool that organizes data based on industry, geography, or issue, among others.

The Role of the Technology Industry

The technology industry, while providing many benefits can also inadvertently create environments that facilitate trafficking and other crimes, including by creating a space that facilitates unsupervised access to children. Many companies acknowledge that the popularity and simplicity of user-friendly application services contribute to unsafe environments by providing traffickers with easy access to communicate, advertise, and coordinate illicit activity. Some technology companies have taken steps to address these challenges, but ongoing efforts are

needed to enhance security measures, improve content moderation, and collaborate with law enforcement to prevent technology from being used by bad actors for illicit activities. Technology can play several roles to include using data and algorithm tools to detect human trafficking patterns, identify suspicious and illicit activity, and report such activity to law enforcement. Technology companies play a pivotal role in protecting victims and vulnerable individuals from being exploited through the use of their online platforms and must be part of the solution to combat human trafficking.

Some technology companies are increasingly investing in better language models and machine learning to allow computers to learn from and make predictions based on data trends. These tools are a useful resource as they may provide law enforcement agencies with powerful tools to more efficiently target illicit activity and possible cases for investigation, but they are not required. Language models can detect, translate, and categorize key words used by traffickers to identify trafficking communication patterns. It can be used to aid international investigations and target traffickers since they often recruit individuals in different countries primarily communicating through technology and internet platforms in the victims' native language. Alongside language models, other machine learning tools have the ability to cross reference various data sets, such as combining law enforcement data and transit trends, to help stakeholders formulate specific algorithms that can trace traffickers' patterns. These tools can enhance collaboration between law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders, as well as quickly close the gap for countries that may not have established effective tools to track or investigate human trafficking. As developers continue to build and enhance anti-trafficking applications for protection, prevention, or prosecution functions, they must be designed to tackle the unique challenges and scenarios that arise in the context of human trafficking.

Regardless of the progress provided by technology tools, it is crucial that anti-trafficking stakeholders be cautious of becoming overly reliant on using AI and facial recognition technology to identify victims of human trafficking and the traffickers. These tools should enhance, not replace, existing methods. Developers, policymakers, and anti-trafficking leaders seeking to improve anti-trafficking efforts with AI and facial recognition tools should prioritize establishing data privacy rights and ensuring individuals' information is protected throughout data-sharing processes.

Workers sort plastic bottles at a recyling facility. Efforts to address the climate crisis, meet global climate targets, and generate economic growth must uphold human rights and reduce the number of individuals vulnerable to labor abuses in global supply chains.

Human Trafficking Defined

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, as amended (TVPA), defines "severe forms of trafficking in persons" as:

- Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or
- The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

A victim need not be physically transported from one location to another for the crime to fall within this definition.

Terminology

As noted in the 2021 report of the U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking (the Council), there are myriad terms survivors use to identify themselves. While some individuals who have experienced trafficking choose to embrace the title "survivor," others do not. Terminology regarding human trafficking varies based on a country's respective laws and language(s). The word "survivor" is not generally defined by law, nor is it universally used or accepted in the context of human trafficking. In some countries, "survivor" may refer to those who have experienced historical, collective, or cultural trauma.

Within the United States, there are some widely used terms for individuals who have experienced human trafficking and subsequently decided to engage in anti-trafficking related work on a professional level. Individuals may prefer to be referred to as "survivor leaders," "survivor advocates," or "subject matter experts with lived experience of human trafficking." Some may have other titles or prefer not to identify based on this experience at all. In recognizing individuals' full life experiences, skill sets, and professional goals, it is important to always ask someone how they want to be identified. Policymakers and stakeholders should not assume that someone who identifies as a "survivor leader," "survivor advocate," or "expert with lived experience of human trafficking" should be referred to as such in a professional setting or that identification as a survivor leader makes it acceptable to inquire about someone's personal experience with human trafficking. For simplicity and consistency, the terms "survivor" and "survivor leader" are used throughout this introduction.

Other important terms used in this introduction and in country narratives within this report include:

- **Victim:** In the United States, the term "victim" means a person who has suffered direct physical, emotional, or pecuniary harm as a result of the commission of a crime. As in the United States, in some other countries "victims" are expressly afforded certain rights and services to assist during and in the aftermath of the commission of that crime. For these reasons, country narratives within this report still make extensive use of this term. Adopting survivor and trauma-informed approaches should not conflict or compete with the provision of assistance entitled to victims.
- **Victim-centered approach:** Stakeholders place the crime victim's priorities, needs, and interests at the center of their work with the victim; providing nonjudgmental assistance, with an emphasis on self-determination, and assisting victims in making informed choices; ensuring restoration of victims' feelings of safety and security are a priority; and safeguarding against policies and practices that may inadvertently re-traumatize victims. A victim-centered approach should also incorporate a trauma-informed, survivor-informed, and culturally competent approach.

Workers unload cargo at a port. Forced labor in thefishing sector remains a significant concern.

- **Survivor-informed approach:** A program, policy, intervention, or product that is designed, implemented, and evaluated with intentional leadership, expertise, and input from a diverse community of survivors to ensure that the program, policy, intervention, or product accurately represents their needs, interests, and perceptions.
- **Trauma-informed approach:** A trauma-informed approach recognizes signs of trauma in individuals and the professionals who help them and responds by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, practices, and settings and by seeking to actively resist re-traumatization. This approach includes an under-standing of the vulnerabilities and experiences of trauma survivors, including the prevalence and physical, social, and emotional impact of trauma. A trauma-informed approach places priority on restoring the survivor's feelings of safety, choice, and control. Programs, services, agencies, and communities can be trauma-informed.
- **Culturally competent approach:** Cultural and linguistic competence is a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations. 'Culture' refers to integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups. 'Competence' implies having the capacity to function effectively as an individual and an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors, and needs presented by consumers and their communities.

Taking Action: Considerations for Anti-Trafficking Stakeholders

Harnessing technology to advance the shared goal of governments, law enforcement actors, technology companies, and civil society to eliminate human trafficking will require proactive efforts by all actors to resolve the complex, often contradictory byproducts of technological progress. Governments can adopt policies and legislation that recognize human traffickers' use of technology and incentivize the positive use of technology tools to investigate and counter human trafficking, and must coordinate implementation of these policies through collaboration with the technology sector, the financial sector, anti-trafficking NGOs, and lived experience experts who can help build capacity to monitor online spaces, train staff, develop technology tools, and cultivate technical expertise. Law enforcement entities can use technology to conduct data analytics on traffickers, their connections, and their *modus operandi* to inform human trafficking investigations and related money laundering activities, bolster the identification of victims online, and enhance safety nets. Governments can also strengthen data security from unauthorized access to better protect victims and investigations and find technology-based solutions that further privacy, safety, and trust. Multilateral forums offer important venues for governments to share best practices and develop new policies and standards that uphold current international frameworks but are also tailored to regional and local trafficking situations and existing technological capabilities.

NGOs can advocate for policies and tech solutions that empower vulnerable individuals, strengthen access to services, advance digital learning, and further privacy protections. Local communities, NGOs, and those with lived experience know current trafficking trends and how technology is being used to facilitate crimes, and thus can recommend ways to enhance trauma-informed and victim-centric tech solutions and ways to get tech tools in the hands of those who most need them. The technology sector should work to ensure their online platforms are being used for legitimate purposes and ensure privacy and safety for users. The technology sector can also invest in new technologies that include detecting and countering child sexual abuse material, livestreaming trafficking offenses, and fraudulent cyber scams or job offers among other crimes occurring on their platforms. Governments, anti-trafficking NGOs, companies, and innovators can also employ routine audits of technology tools as digital technologies evolve to limit negative consequences and better guarantee efficient, sustainable means to address human trafficking.

Collaborative efforts allow all relevant parties to inform and promote best practices for the responsible and safe use of technology by a variety of actors, including individuals vulnerable to technology-facilitated trafficking. The challenge is immense, but political will, resource investments, innovation, and partnerships will help prevent traffickers' use of technology for exploitation, and instead amplify and scale the best applications that assist all anti-trafficking stakeholders in meeting our obligations to combat the newest continuously evolving aspects of this pernicious crime.

Workers sew textiles at a garment factory. Around the world, workers are exploited in the textile industry, often under dangerous conditions. Many garments sold around the world are produced in whole or in part with forced labor.

Understanding Human Trafficking

“Trafficking in persons” and “human trafficking” are umbrella terms—often used interchangeably—to refer to a crime whereby traffickers exploit and profit at the expense of adults or children by compelling them to perform labor or engage in commercial sex. When a person younger than 18 is used to perform a commercial sex act, it is a crime regardless of whether there is any force, fraud, or coercion involved.

The United States recognizes two primary forms of trafficking in persons: forced labor and sex trafficking. The basic meaning of these forms of human trafficking and some unique characteristics of each are set forth below, followed by several key principles and concepts that relate to all forms of human trafficking.

More than 180 nations have ratified or acceded to the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (the UN TIP Protocol), which defines trafficking in persons and contains obligations to prevent and combat the crime.

The United States’ TVPA and the UN TIP Protocol contain similar definitions of human trafficking. The elements of both definitions can be described using a three-element framework focused on the trafficker’s 1) acts; 2) means; and 3) purpose. All three elements are essential to form a human trafficking violation.

Forced Labor

Forced Labor, sometimes also referred to as labor trafficking, encompasses the range of activities involved when a person uses force, fraud, or coercion to exploit the labor or services of another person.

The **"acts"** element of forced labor is met when the trafficker recruits, harbors, transports, provides, or obtains a person for labor or services.

The **"means"** element of forced labor includes a trafficker's use of force, fraud, or coercion. The coercive scheme can include threats of force, debt manipulation, withholding of pay, confiscation of identity documents, psychological coercion, reputational harm, manipulation of the use of addictive substances, threats to other people, or other forms of coercion.

The **"purpose"** element focuses on the perpetrator's goal to exploit a person's labor or services. There is no limit on the location or type of industry. Traffickers can commit this crime in any sector or setting, whether legal or illicit, including but not limited to agricultural fields, factories, restaurants, hotels, massage parlors, retail stores, fishing vessels, mines, private homes, or drug trafficking operations.

All three elements are essential to constitute the crime of forced labor.

There are certain types of forced labor that are frequently distinguished for emphasis or because they are widespread:

Domestic Servitude

"Domestic servitude" is a form of forced labor in which the trafficker requires a victim to perform work in a private residence. Such circumstances create unique vulnerabilities. Domestic workers are often isolated and may work alone in a house. Their employer often controls their access to food, transportation, and housing. What happens in a private residence is hidden from the world – including from law enforcement and labor inspectors – resulting in barriers to victim identification. Foreign domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to abuse due to language and cultural barriers, as well as a lack of community ties. Some perpetrators use these types of conditions as part of their coercive schemes to compel the labor of domestic workers with little risk of detection.

Forced Child Labor

The term "forced child labor" describes forced labor schemes in which traffickers compel children to work. Traffickers often target children because they are more vulnerable. Although some children may legally engage in certain forms of work, forcing or coercing children to work remains illegal. Forms of slavery or slavery-like practices – including the sale of children, forced or compulsory child labor, and debt bondage and serfdom of children – continue to exist, despite legal prohibitions and widespread condemnation. Some indicators of forced labor of a child include situations in which the child appears to be in the custody of a non-family member and the child's work financially benefits someone outside the child's family; or the denial of food, rest, or schooling to a child who is working.

Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking encompasses the range of activities involved when a trafficker uses force, fraud, or coercion to compel another person to engage in a commercial sex act or causes a child to engage in a commercial sex act.

The crime of sex trafficking is also understood through the “acts,” “means,” and “purpose” framework. All three elements are required to establish a sex trafficking crime (except in the case of child sex trafficking where the means are irrelevant).

The “acts” element of sex trafficking is met when a trafficker recruits, harbors, transports, provides, obtains, patronizes, or solicits another person to engage in commercial sex.

The “means” element of sex trafficking occurs when a trafficker uses force, fraud, or coercion. Coercion in the case of sex trafficking includes the broad array of means included in the forced labor definition. These can include threats of serious harm, psychological harm, reputational harm, threats to others, and debt manipulation.

The “purpose” element is a commercial sex act. Sex trafficking can take place in private homes, massage parlors, hotels, or brothels, among other locations, as well as on the internet.

Child Sex Trafficking

In cases where an individual engages in any of the specified “acts” with a child (under the age of 18), the means element is irrelevant regardless of whether evidence of force, fraud, or coercion exists. The use of children in commercial sex is prohibited by law in the United States and most countries around the world.

Key Principles and Concepts

These key principles and concepts relate to all forms of trafficking in persons, including forced labor and sex trafficking.

Consent

Human trafficking can take place even if the victim initially consented to providing labor, services, or commercial sex acts. The analysis is primarily focused on the trafficker’s conduct and not that of the victim. A trafficker can target a victim after a victim applies for a job or migrates to earn a living. The trafficker’s exploitative scheme is what matters, not a victim’s prior consent or ability to meaningfully consent thereafter. Likewise, in a sex trafficking case, an adult victim’s initial willingness to engage in commercial sex acts is not relevant where a perpetrator subsequently uses force, fraud, or coercion to exploit the victim and cause them to continue engaging in the same acts. In the case of child sex trafficking, the consent of the victim is never relevant as a child cannot legally consent to commercial sex.

Movement

Neither U.S. law nor international law requires that a trafficker or victim move across a border for a human trafficking offense to take place. Trafficking in persons is a crime of exploitation and coercion, and not movement. Traffickers can use schemes that take victims hundreds of miles away from their homes or exploit them in the same neighborhoods where they were born.

Debt Bondage

"Debt bondage" is focused on human trafficking crimes in which the trafficker's primary means of coercion is debt manipulation. U.S. law prohibits perpetrators from using debts as part of their scheme, plan, or pattern to compel a person to work or engage in commercial sex. Traffickers target some individuals with an initial debt assumed willingly as a condition of future employment, while in certain countries traffickers tell individuals they "inherited" the debt from relatives. Traffickers can also manipulate debts after the economic relationship begins by withholding earnings or forcing the victim to assume debts for expenses like food, housing, or transportation. They can also manipulate debts a victim owes to other people. When traffickers use debts as a means to compel labor or commercial sex, they have committed a crime.

The Non-Punishment Principle

A victim-centered and trauma-informed approach is key to successful anti-trafficking efforts. A central tenet to such an approach is that victims of trafficking should not be inappropriately penalized solely for unlawful acts they committed as a direct result of being trafficked. Effective implementation of the "non-punishment principle," as it is increasingly referred to, not only requires recognizing and embracing the principle in regional and national laws, but also increasing proactive victim identification.

State-Sponsored Human Trafficking

While the TVPA and UN TIP Protocol call on governments to proactively address trafficking crimes, some governments are part of the problem, directly compelling their citizens into sexual slavery or forced labor schemes. From forced labor in local or national public work projects, military operations, and economically important sectors, or as part of government-funded projects or missions abroad, officials use their power to exploit their nationals. To extract this work, governments coerce by threatening the withdrawal of public benefits, withholding salaries, failing to adhere to limits on national service, manipulating the lack of legal status of stateless individuals and members of minority groups, threatening to punish family members, or conditioning services or freedom of movement on labor or sex. In 2019, Congress amended the TVPA to acknowledge that governments can also act as traffickers, referring specifically to a "government policy or pattern" of human trafficking, trafficking in government-funded programs, forced labor in government-affiliated medical services or other sectors, sexual slavery in government camps, or the employment or recruitment of child soldiers.

Unlawful Recruitment or Use of Child Soldiers

Another manifestation of human trafficking occurs when government forces or any non-state armed group unlawfully recruits or uses children – through force, fraud, or coercion – as soldiers or for labor or services in conflict situations. Children are also used as sex slaves. Sexual slavery, as referred to here, occurs when armed groups force or coerce children to "marry" or be raped by commanders or combatants. Both male and female children are often sexually abused or exploited by members of armed groups and suffer the same types of devastating physical and psychological consequences associated with sex trafficking.

Accountability in Supply Chains

Forced labor is well documented in the private economy, particularly in agriculture, fishing, manufacturing, construction, and domestic work; but no sector is immune. Sex trafficking occurs in several industries as well. Most well-known is the hospitality industry, but the crime also occurs in connection with extractive industries where activities are often remote and lack meaningful government presence. Governments should hold all entities, including businesses, accountable for human trafficking. In some countries, the law provides for corporate accountability in both the civil and criminal justice systems. U.S. law provides such liability for any legal person, including a business that benefits financially from its involvement in a human trafficking scheme, provided that the business knew or should have known of the scheme.

TOPICS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Trafficking in Persons for the Purpose of Organ Removal

Trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal is one of the least reported and least understood forms of trafficking – but one that experts believe may be growing. Like sex trafficking and labor trafficking, it is ultimately a crime that exploits human beings for economic profit. Trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal is "a form of trafficking in which an individual is exploited for their organ, including by coercion, deception and abuse of a position of vulnerability." The crime is sometimes confused with organ trafficking; however, organ trafficking refers more broadly to the illicit trade or exchange of organs for financial or other material gain. In organ trafficking, the focus is on the organ itself; conversely, with trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal, the focus is on the individual. The key global anti-trafficking instrument, the Palermo Protocol, defines exploitation to include at a minimum "the removal of organs," alongside sexual exploitation, forced labor, and slavery or slavery-like practices.

Often, in cases of trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal, would-be donors are tricked into organ donation. Common deceptions include being told human beings have three kidneys or that kidneys regenerate after being removed, or being falsely told they will experience no negative side effects from a kidney removal (in fact, kidney donors may face serious lifelong medical challenges and be unable to work). Although kidneys are the most common organ involved, other organs and tissues, such as livers, corneas, or skin, are also sought, although notably the Palermo Protocol's definition covers only exploitation for the removal of organs, not of tissues or cells. Victims may not be paid at all, or they may receive some payment; importantly, an individual can still be a victim of trafficking in persons or other human rights abuses even if they received some form of payment.

The 2022 UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons noted trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal constituted only 0.2 percent of detected victims of trafficking compared to the much higher numbers for sex trafficking and forced labor. UNODC has warned "existing barriers to reporting suggest that the full scale of this phenomenon is not yet known." The report also noted an uptick in cases (from 25 in 2017 to 40 in 2018), though the overall numbers are small. Between 2008 and 2022, UNODC reported 700 victims of trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal while noting "the scale of the problem is likely to be much larger."

Trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal is difficult to detect for several reasons. Data-collection efforts are scarce, and some instances of trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal may be mistakenly classified or prosecuted as organ trafficking. Moreover, unlike sex trafficking and labor trafficking, which can take place over months or years, trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal usually involves a brief, often one-time, interaction. Like other forms of trafficking, transactions have increasingly shifted online and become more sophisticated, facilitating the emergence of smaller networks, and even independent brokers and suppliers, which may be more difficult to track.

Both the 2020 and 2022 UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons and a 2021 INTERPOL report suggest North Africa and the Middle East have the highest share of detected victims, in part due to the prevalence of large vulnerable communities, limited access to medical care, and corruption. The media and some NGOs have also reported instances of trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal for ritual purposes. However, instances of trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal can occur worldwide. In a case recently prosecuted in the United Kingdom, the victim was recruited in Nigeria and brought to London, where the organ removal was to take place (see inset box for additional information). In another case reported by the BBC in late 2023, revealing the connection between organ trafficking and trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal, Pakistani police arrested eight members of an organ-trafficking ring that "lure[d] vulnerable patients from hospitals" and conducted transplants "often without the patient knowing;" several people died from these procedures.

The government of the People's Republic of China, in particular, has been accused of systematically forcibly removing organs from political prisoners. For example, a group of UN human rights experts noted in 2021:

> Forced organ harvesting in China appears to be targeting specific ethnic, linguistic, or religious minorities held in detention, often without being explained the reasons for arrest or given arrest warrants, at different locations. We are deeply concerned by reports of discriminatory treatment of the prisoners or detainees based on their ethnicity and religion or belief.

(Note: forced organ harvesting is not a term defined in the Palermo Protocol, but the phrase is commonly used to describe trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal.)

While there is a need for additional studies and reporting to thoroughly assess the geographic and numeric scope of trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal, stakeholders are taking steps to attempt to address the issue. A number of regional instruments, including the Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs, the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, and the ASEAN Convention against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, recognize organ removal as a form of trafficking-related exploitation.

Experts have also proposed ideas to increase the supply of legally donated organs, with the intention of making trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal and organ trafficking less lucrative. These ideas include transitioning deceased organ donation from an opt-in to an opt-out system; implementing paired exchanges matching donors and patients; creating awareness campaigns targeted at potential donors, including addressing barriers to altruistic organ donation and providing guidance on how to prevent trafficking in persons for the purpose of organ removal; building the capacity of law enforcement to detect and investigate these cases; and improving transparency and reporting around transplantation.

Twenty-one-year-old "Daniel" (not his real name) scraped out a living selling mobile-phone accessories at an outdoor street market in Lagos, Nigeria, but he thought his luck took a turn when he was offered a "life-changing opportunity" to work in the United Kingdom. The people he believed were his employers instructed him to take a blood test, which he thought was required to secure a visa. The people he had been working with put him on a flight and confiscated his passport. Within days of arriving in London, Daniel was taken to the Royal Free Hospital, where doctors discussed the risks of the upcoming "operation" – something Daniel knew nothing about. Seeing his confusion, the doctors sent Daniel away – but did not notify authorities. Later, Daniel overheard a conversation among those who had brought Daniel to the UK speaking about sending him back to Nigeria to remove his kidney. Scared, Daniel escaped, sleeping on the streets for several days until walking into a police station and telling his story. Daniel's bravery eventually led to the UK's first prosecution of – and convictions for – human trafficking for the purpose of organ removal. A prominent Nigerian politician and his wife who had arranged the trafficking scheme to provide their daughter with a kidney transplant, as well as a Nigerian doctor, were convicted in 2023.

This story was published by the BBC, Organ Harvesting: Trafficked for His Kidney and Now Forced into Hiding, June 26, 2023 (Organ Harvesting: Trafficked for His Kidney and Now Forced into Hiding); for additional details, see the Crown Prosecution Service, May 5, 2023 (Updated with Sentence: Senior Nigerian Politician Jailed Over Illegal UK Organ-Harvesting Plot).

Survivor leaders raise awareness for human trafficking in their community.

TOPICS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Connecting the Dots: Preventing Forced Labor by Empowering Workers

Forced labor, a form of human trafficking, is universally condemned yet prevalent in nearly every industry globally. The International Labour Organization (ILO) reports forced labor has grown in recent years – with no region of the world or private sector industry spared – and the majority of forced labor takes place in the private economy, meaning forced labor is connected to global supply chains. These facts demand a re-examination of current efforts to prevent and address forced labor, including the need to elevate the voice and agency of workers and place them at the center of prevention efforts through strategic partnerships. In addition, particular focus should be placed on vulnerable populations, such as migrant workers. ILO research shows the rates of forced labor among migrant workers are higher if migration is irregular or poorly governed, or where recruitment practices are unfair or unethical.

Although prosecuting specific traffickers and assisting individual victims are critical for governments combating forced labor, successful interventions to prevent forced labor require a range of stakeholders willing to visualize and address broader systemic issues centered on worker's labor rights, including those of migrant workers, as well as supply chain power imbalances. For governments, this may require additional resources and oversight of workplaces, especially in key sectors where forced labor is often present; better monitoring of the labor recruitment industry; increased outreach to and protections for migrant workers; and improved screening measures by well-trained officials targeting populations at greater risk of exploitation. For the private sector, it will mean proactively supporting workers and their ability to advocate for themselves, setting clear expectations of suppliers, and rooting out practices that create environments ripe for exploitation.

Worker-led Approaches to Prevent Forced Labor

Over time, policymakers, academics, and other stakeholders have expanded their thinking to encompass worker-led approaches to address the vulnerabilities of workers and prevent forced labor. Such approaches include advancing labor rights and standards – including freedom of association, collective bargaining, and the remediation of labor rights abuses – as well as worker-driven approaches that include migrants. Research has demonstrated workers are most vulnerable to forced labor if they do not know their rights, are excluded from labor

protection laws, and lack access to grievance mechanisms. Workers in the informal sector and women and girls, who often face gender-based violence and harassment in the workplace, can be particularly vulnerable. One of the most effective ways to prevent worker exploitation is to guarantee workers' full rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining. Independent and democratic labor unions, led by workers, are best able to represent workers' collective interests at multiple levels, including at the national, subnational, regional, and international levels. Collaborating with local workers, regional international organizations, and global union federations, these unions can reach the most vulnerable workers, organize across a labor sector, and advocate for key policy changes, including responsible migration management. As a result, they are well positioned to engage powerful transnational companies to address forced labor in their supply chains.

According to ILO's Director of the Bureau for Workers' Activities, there have been positive developments over time with unions reaching outside of their traditional base to include the unionization of self-employed workers. Many unions have also expanded to include more informal economy, migrant, and domestic workers, which is key as many of these workers are governed by a variety of working arrangements, including fixed-term and temporary contracts.

This diversification of representation is important as unions allow workers to negotiate for better working conditions, influence the laws and policies that impact them, and remediate labor rights abuses. Unions play a pivotal role in securing legislated labor protections and rights, such as legally entitled wages and benefits, occupational safety and health protections, overtime pay, and medical leave. Union-led efforts help raise the wages for the lowest paid and least skilled workers and lead to fewer hours of unpaid overtime work. Unions play crucial roles in identifying labor rights abuses and enforcing rights on the job. One of the most effective ways to prevent the exploitation of migrant workers is by guaranteeing their right to join unions in destination countries. The multiplier impact is notable, as industries with strong union representation tend to have lower levels of labor rights abuse, the worst forms of child labor, and forced labor.

Where there is an absence of unions, there at least should be effective, secure mechanisms for worker communication and grievances. Governments should strongly encourage employers to provide mechanisms so workers can advocate for their rights, discuss workplace issues of concern and interest, and communicate grievances, even if that takes place outside a formal union mechanism. Such mechanisms are essential to preventing forced labor, as they position workers, including migrant workers, to better protect themselves against coercion, deception, discrimination, and other forms of exploitation.

Promising Practices in Improving Labor Conditions

Several examples stand out as raising labor conditions for workers.

- *Dindigul Agreement, India*
  Indian women and the Dalit-worker led union Tamil Nadu Textile and Common Labor Union (TTCU) signed in April 2022 a historic agreement with clothing and textile manufacturers and major fashion companies to end gender-based violence and harassment at factories in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. This enforceable brand agreement resulted in multinational companies committing to support a worker- or union-led program at certain factories or worksites. An assessment a year later by the multi-stakeholder oversight committee found that the workers are now effectively able to detect, remediate, and prevent gender-based violence and harassment. In addition, the TTCU has conducted peer education training of more than 2,000 workers and management, held more than 30 meetings with management to resolve grievances, and recruited 58 workers as monitors to help remediate gender-based violence and harassment throughout the factory units.
- *Freedom of Association for Garment Workers, Honduras*
  In the decade that has followed Honduran workers signing an agreement with major brand Fruit of the Loom, close to 50 percent of all Honduran garment workers are now employed at a factory where an independent union represents the workforce. As a result of this signed collective bargaining agreement, workers have won increased wages and benefits and witnessed a reduction in verbal harassment and gender-based violence.

- While unionization rates vary considerably across the globe, the ILO notes other encouraging examples. In Uzbekistan, trade unions have organized seasonal workers and facilitated dual affiliation to different unions in other countries. In Moldova, unions have begun to establish agreements with unions in destination countries so that migrants have protection when working abroad. In Benin, Botswana, and Mauritius, trade unions have set up Joint Trade Union Councils, which have drawn up joint declarations, charters, and protocols on the modalities of working together in national social dialogue fora. In Lithuania and Ukraine, unions have established structures of cross-border collaboration to improve the recruitment and representation of truck drivers in both countries.

Overall, research has also shown that unionization has spillover effects that extend beyond union workers. Competition means workers at nonunionized firms also often see increased wages and improved workplace safety norms. Union members improve communities through heightened civic engagement and increased voter rates. Unions can also boost business' productivity by giving experienced workers more input into decisions that design better, more cost-effective workplace procedures.

Milestones, Momentum, and Motivation

Over the last several years, government and private sector attention has become focused on resilient supply chains, and there are increasing supply chain transparency and due diligence policies, regulations, and laws globally. In addition, various initiatives have been developed to raise the importance of workers' agency. It is notable that flower-sector leader Bloomia's entire cut-flower supply chain, which encompasses farms in the United States, Chile, and South Africa, will now be certified for human rights protections by the Fair Food Program, pioneers in the worker-driven social responsibility model with its partnerships among retailers, growers, and workers. Combined, the Partnership for Workers' Rights, launched by the United States and Brazil at the 2023 UN General Assembly; the Multilateral Partnership for Worker Organizing, Empowerment, and Rights (M-POWER), which is part of the U.S. Presidential Initiative for Democratic Renewal; and the 2023 U.S. Presidential Memorandum on Advancing Worker Empowerment, Rights, and High Labor Standards present a unique opportunity to proactively advance worker empowerment in the short and long term while simultaneously preventing labor rights violations and abuses, especially forced labor. The independent UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery made a key theme for 2024 the role of trade unions and worker organizations in preventing contemporary forms of slavery.

The timing is ideal for all stakeholders committed to preventing forced labor to fully embrace the importance of supporting, elevating, and improving labor standards, bringing workers' voices to the policy formulation and decision-making table, and working to help the public and private sector enforce rules against unfair labor practices. Governments should take every step to use a whole-of-government approach to advance worker rights and address gaps in labor rights protection and compliance, including for migrant workers; the private sector should see free and fair unions as critical partners in competing in the global economy while protecting workers; and other civil society stakeholders should ensure that workers' voices are incorporated early and often, especially when their equities are at stake.

TOPICS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Nothing About Us Without Us: Human Trafficking and People with Disabilities

Human traffickers often take advantage of persons in vulnerable situations including individuals who lack access to services and programs or rely on the assistance of others. Among this group of potential targets are persons with disabilities, who represent about 16 percent of the world's population, or 1.3 billion people, according to the World Health Organization.

Of course, these 1.3 billion people are not monolithic. Some people have a disability from birth; others experience disability later in their lifetime. Some disabilities are life-long, and others may be temporary. A disability can be visible, such as a physical disability, or non-apparent, such as an intellectual or psychosocial disability. People with disabilities are of every age, race, sex and sex characteristics, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, economic status, and nationality.

Professors Andrea Nichols and Erin Heil have noted the "heightened risk as well as heightened prevalence" of human trafficking involving persons with disabilities, although the authors acknowledged the paucity of existing research. Even when research about persons with disabilities is conducted, it rarely addresses additional intersecting identities, such as race, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or migratory status, that can exacerbate marginalization.

The intersection between disability and human trafficking can be cyclical. On the one hand, persons with disabilities are more likely to be targeted by traffickers; on the other hand, the experience of being trafficked can lead to or exacerbate existing disabilities through physical injuries or emotional trauma that in turn could heighten vulnerability.

Even with access to support, persons with disabilities face increased risk of exploitation. A caregiver may exploit their position to victimize the person they are assisting. Persons with disabilities who receive financial assistance may be exploited for those benefits. As the Human Trafficking Legal Center has explained with respect to the situation in the United States: "While persons with disabilities may be trafficked into sex or labor, many cases include one additional element: the theft of Social Security or disability benefits. The opportunity to steal government benefits provides an added incentive for traffickers to target persons with disabilities." Persons with disabilities across the globe who receive benefits face similar challenges.

In light of this situation, it is perhaps not surprising that the centerpiece of the United States' statutory framework to combat trafficking, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), was promulgated in part as a reaction to the Supreme Court's decision in *United States v. Kozminski*, 487 U.S. 931 (1988), a case involving two men with intellectual disabilities held in what justices referred to as "slave-like" conditions on a farm. In the case, the Court held that the law banning "involuntary servitude" was limited to circumstances involving "the compulsion of services by the use or threatened use of physical or legal coercion." However, Congress subsequently passed the TVPA, which recognized that psychological coercion and threats of nonviolent coercion can be every bit as powerful as physical force in overcoming the will of targeted individuals.

In 2009, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission brought a case involving Henry's Turkey Service, which exploited 32 intellectually disabled men at a farm in Atalissa, Iowa. For more than 30 years, the men endured physical and mental abuse and received virtually no pay. The jury awarded the men what at the time was the largest-ever award in an employment-discrimination case – $240 million – although it was later reduced to $1.6 million due to a federal cap in the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Not only did the TVPA arise in part from trafficking crimes involving persons with disabilities, one of the first major trafficking prosecutions in the United States involved persons with disabilities. In that case, dozens of immigrants with hearing disabilities,

including young children, were forced to work 18-hour days as trinket vendors in New York City. Traffickers targeted persons with disabilities who were also young migrants and did not speak English, exemplifying how disability can intersect with other forms of vulnerability. Sadly, this form of exploitation of persons with disabilities continues to this day.

The TIP Report enhanced its coverage of the intersection of disability and trafficking, with the 2023 TIP Report referencing persons with disabilities in 65 country narratives, up from about 50 in the 2022 TIP Report. These references also highlighted the existence or lack of specialized services for persons with disabilities who are victims of trafficking, and the particular challenges faced by persons with physical or intellectual disabilities.

The U.S. Department of State's disability rights work is led by Special Advisor on International Disability Rights Sara Minkara. In this appointed position, Ms. Minkara leads the comprehensive strategy to promote and protect the rights of persons with disabilities across U.S. foreign policy. Special Advisor Minkara embodies the slogan "nothing about us without us," which is often used by disability rights advocates to insist that persons with disabilities participate fully in policies affecting them. The role of Special Advisor on International Disability Rights was first held by Judy Heumann, who served in the position from 2010 to 2017 and is widely regarded as the "mother of the disability rights movement." Sadly, Ms. Heumann passed away in March 2023, leaving behind an indelible legacy of disability advocacy in the United States and around the world.

From left: Former Special Advisor on International Disability Rights (SAIDR) Judy Heumann, SAIDR Sara Minkara, and Special Assistant to the Special Advisor Hanah Nasri attend a celebration of the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act at the official residence of the Vice President of the United States in July 2022. Photo courtesy of Hanah Nasri.

TOPICS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Framework for Balancing Prosecution, Prevention, and Victim Protection Priorities in Criminal Justice Systems

Holding human traffickers accountable is an essential component of the Palermo Protocol's "3P" paradigm of prosecuting traffickers, protecting victims, and preventing the crime. Prosecutions make powerful statements that human trafficking will not be tolerated, and perpetrators will be held accountable, and because it is important to recognize that prosecution, protection, and prevention efforts are all inextricably intertwined. Victims are better able to assist in investigations and prosecutions when they have access to robust protections, and successful prosecutions protect individual victims from revictimization in addition to preventing the convicted trafficker from exploiting others.

Supporting victims throughout the criminal justice process is critical. Cases often move slowly, leaving victims anxious about the uncertainty of the outcome, fearful of retaliation, re-traumatized by having to recount traumatic events, frustrated by proceedings that can disrupt their lives, and embarrassed, ashamed, or ostracized when information about their victimization becomes public. These feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, trauma, frustration, and fear can be further intensified by the distrust of authorities that traffickers often instill and manipulate to compel victims' silence and their compliance with the traffickers' commands. Victims often experience conflicting pressures from authorities encouraging them to cooperate, traffickers seeking to silence them, and their own efforts to put traumatic events behind them. For some survivors, the opportunity to speak out, be believed, and play an active role in bringing traffickers to justice can be empowering and vindicating. Yet for many, the process can be harrowing, especially when they do not receive sufficient services and support.

The difficulties victims often experience during investigations and prosecutions can further intensify the challenges authorities face when seeking to hold perpetrators accountable, protect their communities, and prevent traffickers from harming others. In striving to bring traffickers to justice without unduly burdening, re-traumatizing, or

endangering victims, prosecutors continually balance the interests of justice, public safety, and protection of the community with the rights and interests of individual victims. Successful strategies for navigating these challenges will inevitably vary to some extent according to the relevant laws and criminal justice systems across various jurisdictions but the promising practices highlighted below can aid in effectively balancing these complex considerations in a wide range of contexts. The end goal is to enhance support for victims and decrease the burdens they experience during the criminal justice process – regardless of whether they are testifying – while also strengthening investigations and prosecutions to increase accountability for traffickers.

Vigorous Victim Protections at All Stages of the Criminal Justice Process

The best way for authorities to support human trafficking survivors is to ensure the provision and continuity of comprehensive services at all stages of the criminal justice process, including in coordination with civil society organizations who specialize in victim services. Children survivors require specialized care and interventions. Robust victim protections, including comprehensive victim-centered, trauma-informed services, are essential to support victims in rebuilding their lives, providing the security and stability they need to safely participate in the criminal justice process, and enabling them to recall and recount their experience. Such services should include access to identity documents, mental health and medical services, housing, and other forms of relief to support physical and mental healing. In addition, survivors should have access to legal support and services, ideally through an independent legal advocate. This support should be tailored to assist the survivor with a range of legal needs, whether related to navigating the investigation and prosecution of the criminal case against the trafficker, to immigration relief, or other legal matters.

Investigators, prosecutors, and victim service providers should collaborate closely to ensure that the victim is stabilized and supported before expecting meaningful participation in the criminal justice process. Trauma can impede a victim's ability to recall and recount relevant events, so investigators and prosecutors should develop advanced expertise in victim-centered, trauma-informed, culturally appropriate methods for stabilizing survivors, building rapport, and conducting effective interviews. Effective interviewing may entail consistent use of professional interpreters to ensure clarity of communication and often benefits from the use of specialized techniques that incorporate the expertise of survivor leaders. These practices can make the victim's participation in the process less burdensome and traumatic. They can also strengthen prosecutions by eliciting more accurate statements, minimizing discrepancies that could later be used to attack the victim's credibility, and enabling the victim to provide more detailed information that could lead to other sources of evidence.

Protection and services for trafficking victims should not be conditioned on whether the trafficker is charged or convicted. In cases where a foreign victim chooses to return to their home country, relocation assistance should be provided and authorities should proceed with prosecutions involving repatriated victims when possible, by having them present evidence virtually where authorized by law or by funding their return travel for court proceedings as necessary. Access to comprehensive support is not only in the best interest of survivors- it also increases the likelihood they will feel sufficiently safe and empowered to assist in the investigation and prosecution. Whether survivors testify against the trafficker or provide more limited assistance to law enforcement, support for their long-term well-being should be a priority even after the case is closed.

Developing Evidence to Decrease Reliance on Victim Testimony

Another best practice in prosecuting trafficking cases is the use of strategic investigative processes to develop evidence that supports the statements or testimony of trafficking survivors. In human trafficking prosecutions, every piece of evidence counts because each piece of corroborating evidence is important to reduce reliance on victim testimony, preventing undue credibility attacks, and to increase the likelihood of conviction.

All human trafficking victims who provide statements, declarations, or testimony are inevitably subjected to credibility challenges, whether by jurists in inquisitorial systems that decide whether the victim's statements are sufficiently reliable or by the defense in adversarial systems. Victims' credibility is often scrutinized based on issues such as delays in reporting their victimization, trauma-related inconsistencies in recalling and recounting certain details, or involvement in unlawful acts related to their victimization. Corroborating evidence can be essential to countering such credibility attacks, increasing the likelihood of the victim's statements or testimony being believed, and leading to higher rates of convictions. Investigators and prosecutors should engage in early and continuous collaboration to assess ways to pursue other sources of evidence beyond victim testimony and to corroborate available statements and evidence through sources such as electronic records, physical evidence,

and other potential witnesses.

In some cases, other admissible evidence uncovered during a thorough investigation may minimize the need for victim testimony and can become essential to enabling a prosecution to proceed even if the victim is not able to participate in the trial. Even evidence that provides only limited circumstantial corroboration of one small aspect of a trafficker's conduct can, when combined with other evidence, provide significant substantiation of a survivor's account. Investigators and prosecutors should clearly communicate to survivors that they are not "responsible" for the successful investigation and prosecution, that services and protections are not dependent on the outcome of the criminal case, and that authorities are responsible for gathering relevant evidence from all available sources. Such evidence can also significantly reduce the burdens felt by the victim and the risks of re-traumatization associated with participating as a witness.

Victim-Centered, Trauma-Informed Charging and Prosecution Practices

One of a prosecutor's most serious responsibilities is to utilize all available avenues to protect the victim and prevent witness intimidation efforts that could compromise both the victim's sense of safety and the integrity of the investigation. Such avenues include seeking court orders, including restraining orders, orders of protection, and no-contact orders to prohibit the defendant from attempting to contact the victim either directly or indirectly. They also include working with law enforcement and victim advocates to prepare a safety plan and document any attempted contact. Prosecutors should encourage survivors to seek help from a trusted point of contact with the police or other authorities and to immediately disclose to the prosecutor or advocate any attempt by the traffickers to contact them. Documented attempts to contact or intimidate the victim should be used in appropriate instances to bring additional obstruction-of-justice or witness tampering charges and may be relevant to explain a victim's reluctance to cooperate as a witness or recant earlier statements. Proof of the trafficker's efforts to contact the victim may also allow the prosecutor to introduce otherwise inadmissible evidence.

Even if the survivor is able and willing to testify, the prosecutor should introduce corroborating evidence to bolster and support their testimony, which is especially important when a survivor's trauma has caused inconsistency in their statements or memory. Prosecutors may also consider using expert testimony in appropriate instances to explain the impacts of trauma on memory and recall. Admissible evidence may include the survivor's medical records, testimony from first responders or other witnesses to relevant incidents, certain statements made by the accused, electronic messages, physical evidence recovered from relevant locations, and video recordings. Additional evidence gathered using well-designed and implemented strategic investigative processes can in some instances serve, when possible, as a substitute for the victim's critical testimony, either completely or on select issues, if the victim becomes unavailable or has difficulty testifying effectively.

Unfortunately, despite all efforts to develop other evidence, some cases of the underlying trafficking offenses cannot proceed without the testimony of the victim. In those instances, certain practices can be used to pursue prosecutions and accountability while minimizing undue burdens and adverse impacts on survivors. Prosecutors can strategically focus charges on the most readily provable aspects of the criminal conduct such as assaults, threats, financial crimes, possession of illicit images, or witness tampering, which may be less reliant on victim testimony but may still provide significant opportunities to hold offenders accountable. Prosecutors can also seek to resolve cases through guilty pleas in appropriate instances to secure substantial justice without the need for victim testimony at trial.

When a victim does need to testify, prosecutors should file all applicable motions to limit the scope of their testimony to relevant facts and preclude inappropriate cross-examination about the victim's prior bad acts or sexual history. When allowed by law, prosecutors should consider seeking the court's permission to present the victim's testimony virtually or in any other manner that preserves the defendant's right to confront the accuser while physically separating the victim from the defendant. Victim services and security should be provided throughout all stages of trial preparation, trial, and sentencing.

Human trafficking survivors with lived experience are uniquely positioned to provide insight, guidance, and expertise on establishing appropriate support systems, strategic investigative processes, and prosecutorial practices that allow victims to be heard and supported at all stages of investigations and prosecutions. Incorporating survivor-informed expertise is essential to providing the security, stability, and support survivors need to participate safely and effectively as witnesses, while reducing the burdens and risks of re-traumatization often associated with the criminal justice process and strengthening efforts to hold traffickers accountable.

Children carry acai berries across a river. Some cases of forced child labor in agriculture are instances of familial trafficking and result from economic and cultural factors that normalize the exploitation.

TOPICS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Key Trafficking Issues in the Western Hemisphere Region

Human trafficking manifests itself differently around the world. In the Western Hemisphere – North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean – there are broad commonalities in trafficking trends countries face and how their governments and authorities approach the crime. Below is an overview of shared issues in the region to illustrate the overall situation and **coordinate the anti-trafficking efforts of governments and other stakeholders**. These regional issues are extrapolated from the individual narratives for the countries in the region, including the United States.

Unprecedented irregular migration in the region affects all Western Hemisphere countries. Migrants and asylum seekers are especially vulnerable to sex trafficking and forced labor, including by large and small organized criminal groups. Migrants who rely on migrant smugglers are at particularly high risk of exploitation as many assume debt to pay migrant smugglers. Irregular migration may also include individuals already exploited by traffickers, as victims may be motivated to migrate and seek protection elsewhere. While some countries enacted policies aimed at reducing migrants' vulnerability to trafficking by providing temporary residency and access to formal employment, education, healthcare, and other services, we encourage all countries faced with irregular migration challenges to prevent trafficking and prioritize screening among migrants.

Countries across the region generally have a good understanding of and response to sex trafficking, especially in identification of women who are victims. Governments also undertake and emphasize the importance of law enforcement and criminal justice approaches to address trafficking, even if implementation is uneven. Many governments seek to tackle both internal and transnational human trafficking. In broad terms, there is political will in many countries to address human trafficking, particularly sex trafficking.

Weak efforts targeting **forced labor** remain a concern in the Western Hemisphere. Governments generally focus on addressing sex trafficking and have weaker, poorly enumerated procedures to prosecute labor traffickers and

protect victims of forced labor. Labor Inspectorates are underfunded and understaffed and typically have limited or no authority to inspect informal sector worksites where many victims are exploited, especially along changing migration routes. Governments' lack of attention to labor trafficking leaves victims unprotected in multiple sectors, including **agriculture, mining, logging, maritime, and service**.

Traffickers also exploit many victims in **forced criminality**. Organized crime groups, including gangs and illegal armed groups, exploit girls in child sex trafficking, force children into street begging, forcibly recruit or use child soldiers, and coerce and threaten young men and women to transport drugs, commit extortion, act as lookouts, or commit acts of violence, including murder. Organized crime groups target groups of migrants unable to enter a country due to border restrictions or awaiting asylum decisions, including at the U.S.-Mexico border. **State-sponsored forced labor** is also a concern, specifically Cuba's labor export program, including its medical missions – which the Cuban government continues to profit from by subjecting workers to forced labor and exploitation.

Gaps in trafficking **victim protection** are another broad concern in the Western Hemisphere. For years governments have lacked (or failed to provide the necessary) financial and human resources to **screen** for and **identify** trafficking victims and provide them trauma-informed services. Some governments have developed policies and protocols for screening victims and referring them to care, but implementation has been inconsistent or ineffective. In addition, governmental interagency coordination is weak, with working groups often disjointed and disempowered, which is particularly detrimental to the cross-sectoral collaboration needed for victim protection efforts. These problems are particularly notable among migrants, whom governments rarely screen for trafficking indicators.

Furthermore, governments make weak screening and identification efforts even with **underserved populations and marginalized groups** recognized as at high risk to trafficking, including Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and LGBTQI+ persons, as well as members of other ethnic and linguistic minorities, migrants, refugees, and displaced persons. These populations also frequently experience discrimination from authorities, often making them fearful to report crimes or access care and justice. Finally, there are **insufficient trafficking-specific services** for victims, particularly for men and boys, in most countries across the region. Governments refer identified trafficking victims to support systems designed to serve other populations, such as migrants, individuals experiencing homelessness, or victims of gender-based violence, which do not meet the specific needs of trafficking victims. Similarly, access to justice and services is concentrated in large urban areas, while the most vulnerable individuals frequently live in rural areas with limited government presence. Lack of victim-centered and trauma-informed services can hinder victim identification, prevent healing, increase risk of re-trafficking, and fuel impunity by making survivors less likely to participate in the case against their traffickers.

Criminal justice responses and **definitions** of trafficking are concerning across the region. Many governments have weaknesses in their **legal systems** and **uneven judicial application** of trafficking laws, including levying fines in lieu of imprisonment for trafficking crimes, imposing penalties not commensurate with those for other crimes, and failing to criminalize all forms of child sex trafficking. Judges, in particular, may lack adequate training in applying trafficking laws and coercive methods traffickers use, which impacts their decisions and sentences. Impunity for trafficking crimes fosters misperceptions about trafficking among both policymakers and the public. Inadequate law enforcement efforts and insufficient capacity-building for law enforcement and other first responders hinders or impacts efforts in **low-capacity countries**, especially in the Caribbean. Governments with limited resources often do not recognize or implement low-cost/high-impact anti-trafficking policies. **Official complicity** within law enforcement, the prison system, and local government facilitates trafficking crimes across some governments, but criminal prosecution of complicit officials lags behind the already low number of convictions of other traffickers. **Child sex trafficking** and **extraterritorial commercial child sexual exploitation and abuse** are also pervasive concerns, particularly due to the increased use of social media and online platforms to recruit victims. Many officials **conflate** human trafficking with other crimes, including migrant smuggling, child labor, sexual violence against children, illegal commercial sex, and illegal adoption. Because of this confusion, governments may misidentify trafficking victims, fail to give them adequate support, and therefore underreport trafficking crimes. These problems lead to **inadequate data collection** and reporting on human trafficking and, therefore, an incomplete understanding of the extent of the crime in the hemisphere.

A survivor stands in her home. Traffickers use the promise of marriage or a romantic relationship to lure young women away from their homes and support networks, making them less likely to attempt escape once forced into labor trafficking or sex trafficking.

TOPICS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

The Intersection of Forced Marriage and Human Trafficking

The question of whether forced marriage constitutes a human trafficking crime is complex, and the answer can vary depending on the circumstances of the forced marriage and the applicable national laws.

Governments around the world have taken different approaches to the issue, both in terms of the laws they have enacted and of the way those laws are implemented in practice. While the governing international law on trafficking in persons, the UN TIP Protocol, allows for flexibility in how State Parties criminalize human trafficking under domestic legislation, establishing exploitative intent is critical to considering whether the conduct constitutes trafficking in persons.

What is forced marriage?

The 2022 update to the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally defines forced marriage as a marriage at any age that occurs without the free and full consent of both parties, including anyone under the age of 18 who is not able to give full consent. Forced marriage may occur when family members or others use physical or emotional abuse, threats, fraud, or deception to obtain an individual's agreement. In such cases, an individual cannot be considered to have consented to the marriage. The terms "early marriage" and "child marriage" are often used interchangeably to refer to any marriage in which at least one of the parties has not attained the age of 18. There is overwhelming evidence that child, early, and forced marriages can increase individuals' vulnerability to future exploitation and abuse – with long-term consequences for their health, wellbeing, safety, and opportunities.

Is Forced Marriage a Form of Trafficking under International Law?

Article 3 of the UN TIP Protocol defines "trafficking in persons" to require three essential elements—an act, conducted using one or more means, for an exploitative purpose. Article 3 does not list forced marriage explicitly

as a form of exploitation; instead, it provides that "exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs." Accordingly, when a forced marriage involves any of the acts, means, and purposes of exploitation listed in Article 3, it would be considered trafficking under the UN TIP Protocol. For example, forced marriages that also involve forced labor or services, or slavery or practices similar to slavery would also be trafficking in persons if the relevant acts and means are present. However, the non-exhaustive list of forms of exploitation in Article 3 allows State Parties to decide to expand the list of forms of exploitation within their own domestic definition of trafficking in line with the purpose and scope.

While the UN TIP Protocol does not explicitly include forced marriage within the definition of trafficking, many stakeholders argue that if all the elements of trafficking are present (i.e., there is an act, a prohibited means, done for the purpose of exploiting another person), it should not matter that the exploitation takes the form of a forced marriage. These stakeholders point to the identical practices used by unscrupulous recruiters who are paid by business owners or prospective husbands to deceive and obtain the consent of individuals to marry "loving wealthy husbands" or accept "lucrative job offers," in both instances only to leave victims trapped and exploited.

Countries that have chosen to include forced marriage within their domestic definitions of trafficking, either explicitly or implicitly, have taken three common approaches:

Forced Marriage Included as a Form of Exploitation
By leaving the list of forms of exploitation under Article 3 open-ended, the UN TIP Protocol allows State Parties to choose to expand the list of forms of exploitation included under domestic anti-trafficking laws. As such, some countries have chosen to include forced marriage as an exploitative purpose under their respective anti-trafficking laws. Several countries have taken this approach, including, but not limited to: Argentina, Australia, Botswana, Cambodia, Chad, Costa Rica, Croatia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Haiti, Kenya, Lithuania, Nicaragua, North Macedonia, Seychelles, and Uganda.

"Practices Similar to Slavery" Interpreted to Include Some Forms of Forced Marriage
Other countries interpret the inclusion of "practices similar to slavery" within Article 3 of the UN TIP Protocol to include certain forms of forced marriage. "Practices similar to slavery" is defined in the Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery. Under Article 1(c) of this convention, "practices similar to slavery" refers to, inter alia, "Any institution or practice whereby: (i) A woman, without the right to refuse, is promised or given in marriage on payment of a consideration in money or in kind to her parents, guardian, family or any other person or group; or (ii) The husband of a woman, his family, or his clan, has the right to transfer her to another person for value received or otherwise; or (iii) A woman on the death of her husband is liable to be inherited by another person …"
For countries that use this definition of "practices similar to slavery" to interpret the scope of the definition of trafficking in persons under the UN TIP Protocol, some, but not all, forms of forced marriage could constitute trafficking in persons.

Forced Marriage and Trafficking in Persons as Distinct Crimes.
It is also worth mentioning that there are many countries that choose to address forced marriage and trafficking in persons as separate offenses. In its 2020 Issue Paper "Interlinkages Between Trafficking in Persons and Marriage," the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) acknowledges the viability of these different approaches and explains that there is "no one-size-fits-all approach to most effectively counter cases involving interlinkages between trafficking in persons and marriage."

Establishing Exploitative Intent is Critical in All Approaches

At the heart of the question of whether a forced marriage constitutes a human trafficking crime is the question of whether the intention was to exploit a person or persons through the marriage. Recently, the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union recognized the gravity of and increasing linkages between forced marriages and human trafficking. They formally adopted a directive noting that the exploitation of forced marriages "fall[s] within the scope of offenses concerning trafficking in human beings…to the extent that all the criteria constituting those offenses are fulfilled."

While States that choose explicitly to include forced marriage within their definition of exploitation, or implicitly, through the inclusion of "practices similar to slavery," consider "forced marriage as inherently exploitative," such an interpretation is neither required nor shared by all States. As UNODC explains,

> …cultural and national contexts are relevant in determining exploitation, especially in relation to forced and servile marriage. Cultural and other context-specific factors can play a role in shaping perception of what constitutes exploitative conduct for the purposes of establishing that trafficking has occurred.

Marriages generally involve domestic work and sexual relations between spouses, neither of which is generally understood to constitute abuse or exploitation. However, there are circumstances in which individuals may be exploited in connection with each of these under the guise of marital obligations. Taking into consideration the cultural and national contexts in which marriages transpire is a complex but necessary task when determining whether all three elements of a human trafficking offense are present in a case involving forced marriage.

While it is understood forced marriage is inherently harmful, rooted in gender inequality, and can often dramatically increase the risks of individuals to trafficking in persons, gender-based violence (GBV), and other abuses or crimes, it is important to acknowledge there may be circumstances in which a forced marriage has occurred, but the offense of human trafficking has not, because the purpose of the marriage was not to exploit another individual. For example, in some communities, even an untruthful allegation of sexual indiscretion or promiscuity can irreparably damage a girl's prospects of marriage or place her in physical danger. Parents in these communities may attempt to protect their daughters by marrying them at a young age to avoid such allegations and safeguard their reputations. Similarly, families who live in refugee camps or other unstable situations where there is high prevalence of multiple forms of violence, including GVB, may view marriage as a protective mechanism that will prevent their daughters from being victims of physical or sexual violence or offer them greater economic security. In these instances, such marriages commonly occur without an individual giving their full, free, and informed agreement to marry. By definition, such an arrangement would constitute a forced marriage and depending on the country, potentially a violation of domestic criminal laws. However, if no one involved in arranging the marriage (not the spouse, parents, matchmaker, etc.) is participating for the purpose of exploiting the individual, then the necessary elements of trafficking in persons are not met. Other crimes or human rights abuses may have occurred and should be addressed, but the specific crime of human trafficking has not occurred because the marriage was not for the purpose of exploitation. To the contrary, taking into account the relevant cultural and social norms, these actors may believe they are acting in the best interest of the individual. As in all criminal cases, the knowledge and intent of the individual matters and therefore, in the case of forced marriages as a potential trafficking crime, one must consider if an individual intended to exploit someone, or whether they intended, even misguidedly and mistakenly, to do what was believed to be in the individual's best interest. These complicated dynamics must be determined in other trafficking contexts as well.

Therefore, when allegations of forced marriage are presented, they must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine whether they constitute trafficking in persons. Such an assessment neither legitimizes forced marriage nor detracts from serious concerns around such practices. Rather, it simply ensures the appropriate criminal prosecution, protection, and prevention responses are utilized to address the conduct in question because, as UNODC explains, "….qualifying a particular type of conduct as trafficking in persons has extensive consequences for both the alleged perpetrators and victims of the crime."

* NOTE: U.S. law does not explicitly recognize forced marriage as a "severe form of trafficking in persons" or reference it in criminal trafficking laws. Therefore, forced marriage, per se, is not automatically considered a form of trafficking in persons under U.S. law. The facts and circumstances of the forced marriage must be considered to determine whether the conduct falls under a relevant definition or legal provision. Generally, if the person forced to marry is also compelled to work or to engage in commercial sex, then the forced marriage would likely fall within the definition of trafficking in persons and be a crime under U.S. law. Because the definition of "severe forms of trafficking in persons" established under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act governs the Department's minimum standard assessments for the purposes of the TIP Report, the Department accordingly includes governments' efforts to combat forced marriage if there is credible evidence that those efforts address forced marriage in which the objective of the marriage was to exploit another person for labor or services or commercial sex.

An Example of When a Forced Marriage Involved Human Trafficking:
United States of America v. Zahida Aman, et al.

In *United States of America v. Zahida Aman*, et al., the United States successfully prosecuted and convicted three individuals for trafficking crimes relating to a forced marriage. On January 24, 2023, the traffickers were sentenced to five, ten, and 12 years of imprisonment, respectively, and ordered to pay restitution to the victim. The case serves as an example of how forced marriage and human trafficking can intersect and result in complex and devastating exploitation of vulnerable individuals, as abuse often goes undetected for long periods of time due to its hidden nature within the confines of familial relationships.

> *A federal jury sitting in Richmond, Virginia, found defendants Zahida Aman, Mohammad Nauman Chaudhri, and Mohammad Rehan Chaudhri guilty of conspiracy to commit forced labor for compelling the domestic labor of a Pakistani woman for 12 years. The jury further found defendant Aman guilty of forced labor and document servitude, and defendant Rehan Chaudhri guilty of forced labor.*
>
> *According to the evidence presented in court, defendant Zahida Aman arranged for her son's marriage to the victim in 2001. The victim moved to the United States and lived in a house in Midlothian, Virginia, with her husband and the three defendants (the husband's mother and his two brothers). The defendants compelled the victim to serve the family as a domestic servant, using physical and verbal abuse, restricting communication with her family in Pakistan, confiscating her immigration documentation and money, and eventually threatening to separate her from her children by deporting her to Pakistan.*
>
> *The defendants slapped, kicked, and pushed the victim, even beat her with wooden boards, and on one occasion hog-tied her hands and feet and dragged her down the stairs in front of her children. Even after the victim's husband moved away, the defendants kept the victim in their Virginia home, often forcing her to perform increasingly laborious tasks…*
>
> *The evidence further showed that the defendants required the victim to work every day, beginning early each morning. They restricted her food, forbade her from learning to drive or speaking to anyone except the defendants' family members and prohibited her from calling her family in Pakistan.*
>
> *Press Release, U.S. Department of Justice*

Migrants jump between cars on a train traveling through multiple countries.

TOPICS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Human Trafficking in Cuba's Labor Export Program

Each year, the Cuban government sends tens of thousands of workers around the globe under multi-year cooperation agreements negotiated with receiving countries. While medical missions remain the most prevalent, the Cuban government also profited from other similarly coercive labor export programs, including those involving teachers, artists, athletes and coaches, engineers, forestry technicians, and nearly 7,000 merchant mariners worldwide. According to a report published by the Cuban government, by the end of 2023, there were more than 22,000 government-affiliated Cuban workers in over 53 countries, and medical professionals composed 75 percent of its exported workforce. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the need for medical workers in many places around the world, and the Cuban government used the opportunity to expand its reach by increasing the number of its medical personnel abroad through the Henry Reeve Brigades, which Cuba first initiated in 2005 to respond to natural disasters and epidemics. Experts estimate the Cuban government collects $6 billion to $8 billion annually from its export of services, which includes the medical missions. The labor export program remains the largest foreign revenue source for the Cuban government.

There are serious concerns with Cuba's recruitment and retention practices surrounding the labor export program. While the conditions of each international labor mission vary from country to country, the Cuban government subjects all government-affiliated workers to the same coercive laws. Cuba has a government policy or pattern to profit from forced labor in the labor export program, which includes foreign medical missions. The Cuban government labels workers who leave the program without completing it as "deserters," a category that under Cuban immigration law deems them as "undesirable." The government bans workers labeled as "deserters"

and “undesirables” from returning to Cuba for eight years, preventing them from visiting their families in Cuba. It categorizes Cuban nationals who do not return to the country within 24 months as having “emigrated.” Individuals who emigrate lose all their citizen protections, rights under Cuban law, and any property they left behind. These government policies and legal provisions, taken together, coerce workers and punish those seeking to exercise freedom of movement. According to credible sources, by 2021, the Cuban government had sanctioned 40,000 professionals under these provisions, and by 2022, there were approximately 5,000 children forcibly separated from their parents due to the government’s policies surrounding the program.

Complaints filed with the International Criminal Court and the UN indicate most workers did not volunteer for the program, some never saw a contract or knew their destination, many had their passports confiscated by Cuban officials once they arrived at their destination, and almost all had “minders” or overseers. According to the complaints and survivors, Cuban heads of mission in the country subjected workers to surveillance, prevented them from freely associating with locals, and imposed a strict curfew. Cuba also confiscated between 75 and 90 percent of each worker’s salary. As a result of the well-founded complaints and information about the exploitative nature of Cuba’s labor export program, at the end of 2023, the UN Special Rapporteur for Contemporary Forms of Slavery filed a new communication outlining the persistent concerns with the program, particularly for Cuban workers in Italy, Qatar, and Spain.

While exploitation, including forced labor, of workers remains the primary concern with the program, Cuba’s practices can also negatively impact a host country’s healthcare system. Survivors of the program have reported being forced by the Cuban in-country mission director to falsify medical records and misrepresent critical information to justify their presence and need to local authorities. Some individuals reported discarding medications, fabricating names, and documenting medical procedures that never occurred. When medical workers refused to comply with the demands of the Cuban in-country mission director, they faced punishment and retaliation. While the Cuban government promotes workers as highly skilled medical professionals and specialists, these workers often lack adequate medical training to treat complex conditions. These practices are unethical, negligent, exploitative, and risk the lives of those they serve.

Governments should make efforts to combat human trafficking, and this includes not purchasing goods or services made or provided with forced labor. Governments that utilize Cuba’s labor export programs despite the serious concerns with the program should at a minimum conduct frequent and unannounced labor inspections to screen these workers for trafficking indicators and employ victim-centered interviewing techniques. These host governments should ensure all Cuban workers are subject to the same laws, regulations, and protections as for other migrant workers and that they are not brought via a negotiated agreement with the Government of Cuba that limits these protections or exempts Cuban workers from Wage Protections Systems or other tools designed to strengthen transparency. Officials should ensure workers maintain complete control of their passports and medical certifications and can provide proof of full salary payment to bank accounts under the workers’ control. They should scrutinize medical reports produced by these workers, offer protection for those who face retaliation and punishment for terminating their employment, and raise awareness of trafficking risks for all foreign workers, including government-affiliated Cuban workers.

Child Soldiers Prevention Act List

Section 402 of the Child Soldiers Prevention Act, as amended (CSPA) requires publication in the annual TIP Report of a list of foreign governments identified during the previous year as having governmental armed forces, police, or other security forces, or government-supported armed groups that recruit or use child soldiers, as defined in the CSPA. These determinations cover the reporting period beginning April 1, 2023 and ending March 31, 2024.

For the purpose of the CSPA, and generally consistent with the provisions of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the term "child soldier" means:

1. any person under 18 years of age who takes a direct part in hostilities as a member of governmental armed forces, police, or other security forces;
2. any person under 18 years of age who has been compulsorily recruited into governmental armed forces, police, or other security forces;
3. any person under 15 years of age who has been voluntarily recruited into governmental armed forces, police, or other security forces; or
4. any person under 18 years of age who has been recruited or used in hostilities by armed forces distinct from the armed forces of a state.

The term "child soldier" includes any person described in clauses (ii), (iii), or (iv) who is serving in any capacity, including in a support role, such as a "cook, porter, messenger, medic, guard, or sex slave."

Governments identified on the list are subject to restrictions, in the following fiscal year, on certain security assistance and commercial licensing of military equipment. The CSPA prohibits assistance to governments that are identified in the list under the following authorities: International Military Education and Training, Foreign Military Financing, Excess Defense Articles, and Peacekeeping Operations, with exceptions for some programs undertaken pursuant to the Peacekeeping Operations authority. The CSPA also prohibits the issuance of licenses for direct commercial sales of military equipment to such governments. Beginning October 1, 2024, and effective throughout Fiscal Year 2025, these restrictions will apply to the listed countries, absent a presidential waiver, applicable exception, or reinstatement of assistance pursuant to the terms of the CSPA. The determination to include a government in the CSPA list is informed by a range of sources, including first-hand observation by U.S. government personnel and research and credible reporting from various UN entities, international organizations, local and international NGOs, and international and domestic media outlets.

The 2024 CSPA List includes governments of the following countries:

Afghanistan	**Iran**	**Somalia**	**Venezuela**
Burma	**Libya**	**South Sudan**	**Yemen**
Cameroon	**Mali**	**Sudan**	
Central African Republic	**Russia**	**Syria**	
Congo, Democratic Republic of the	**Rwanda**	**Türkiye**	

Laborers carry timber to be cut and processed. State sponsored forced labor can occur in a range of sectors, including national public works, extractive industries, or military operations.

When the Government is the Trafficker: State-Sponsored Trafficking in Persons

While the TVPA Minimum Standards for the Elimination of Trafficking In Persons and the UN TIP Protocol call on governments proactively to address trafficking crimes, some governments are part of the problem, directly compelling their citizens or other individuals into sex trafficking or forced labor. Some governments exploit individuals in forced labor in local or national public works projects, military operations, economically important sectors, as part of government-funded projects or missions abroad, or in sexual slavery on government compounds. Governments extract this work or service by threatening the withdrawal of public benefits; withholding salaries; intentionally failing to adhere to limits on national service; manipulating the lack of legal status of stateless individuals and other minority groups; threatening to punish family members; or conditioning services, food, or freedom of movement on labor or sex.

In 2019, Congress amended the TVPA to acknowledge that governments can also act as traffickers, referring specifically to a “government policy or pattern” of human trafficking; human trafficking in government-funded programs; forced labor (in government-affiliated medical services, agriculture, forestry, mining, construction, or other sectors); sexual slavery in government camps, compounds, or outposts; or employing or recruiting child soldiers. While the TVPA already directs the Secretary to consider the extent to which “officials or employees of the government have participated in, facilitated, condoned, or were otherwise complicit in” trafficking when

determining whether the government is making significant efforts to meet the minimum standards, this section directly links a government's "policy or pattern" of trafficking to a Tier 3 ranking.

The 2024 TIP Report includes the following 13 countries with a documented "policy or pattern" of human trafficking, trafficking in government-funded programs, forced labor in government-affiliated medical services or other sectors, sexual slavery in government camps, or the employment or recruitment of child soldiers:

** The TIP Report describes the state of human trafficking within a country and with respect to Afghanistan, assesses the actions of Afghan ministries, as well as the Taliban, without implying recognition of the Taliban or another entity as the government of Afghanistan.*

"The scourge of human trafficking continues to evolve. Civil unrest and war across the globe, natural disasters, climate change, and the advent and increasing reach of social media all pose significant challenges."

Sameer Jain, Member of U.S. Advisory Council on Human Trafficking

Methodology

The Department of State prepared this report using information from U.S. embassies, government officials, nongovernmental and international organizations, published reports, news articles, academic studies, consultations with authorities and organizations in every region of the world, and information submitted to tipreport@state.gov. This email address provides a means by which organizations and individuals can share information with the Department of State throughout the year on government progress in addressing human trafficking.

U.S. diplomatic posts and domestic agencies reported on the human trafficking situation and governmental action to fight trafficking based on thorough research that included meetings with a wide variety of government officials, local and international NGO representatives, officials of international organizations, journalists, academics, and survivors. U.S. missions overseas are dedicated to covering human trafficking issues year-round. The 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report covers government efforts undertaken from April 1, 2023 through March 31, 2024, to the extent concurrent reporting data is available.

Tier Placement

The Department places each country in this report onto one of four categories. This placement is based not on the size of a country's problem but on the extent of government efforts to meet the Trafficking Victims Protection Act's (TVPA) minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking (see page 54), which are generally consistent with the Palermo Protocol.

While Tier 1 is the highest ranking, it does not mean that a country has no human trafficking problem or that it is doing enough to address the crime. Rather, a Tier 1 ranking indicates that a government has made efforts to address the problem that meet the TVPA's minimum standards. To maintain a Tier 1 ranking, governments need to demonstrate appreciable progress each year in combating trafficking. Tier 1 represents a responsibility rather than a reprieve.

Tier rankings and narratives in the 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report reflect an assessment of the following:

- enactment of laws prohibiting severe forms of trafficking in persons, as defined by the TVPA, and provision of criminal punishments for trafficking crimes;
- criminal penalties prescribed for human trafficking crimes which are sufficiently stringent and commensurate with those prescribed for other grave crimes;
- implementation of human trafficking laws through vigorous prosecution of the prevalent forms of trafficking in the country and adequate sentencing of traffickers;
- proactive victim identification measures with systematic procedures to guide law enforcement and other government-supported front-line responders in the process of victim identification;
- government funding and partnerships with NGOs to provide victims with access to primary health care, counseling, and shelter, allowing them to recount their trafficking experiences to trained counselors and law enforcement in an environment of minimal pressure;
- victim protection efforts that include access to services and shelter without detention and with legal alternatives to removal to countries in which victims would face retribution or hardship;
- the extent to which a government ensures victims are provided with legal and other assistance and that, consistent with domestic law, proceedings are not prejudicial to victims' rights, dignity, or psychological well-being;
- the extent to which a government ensures the safe, humane, and, to the extent possible, voluntary repatriation and reintegration of victims;
- governmental measures to prevent human trafficking, including efforts to curb practices identified as contributing factors to human trafficking, such as employers' confiscation of foreign workers' passports and allowing labor recruiters to charge fees to prospective migrants; and
- governmental efforts to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts and extraterritorial sexual exploitation and abuse.

Tier rankings and narratives are **NOT** affected by the following:

- efforts, however laudable, undertaken exclusively by nongovernmental actors in the country;
- general public awareness events—government-sponsored or otherwise—lacking concrete ties to the prosecution of traffickers, protection of victims, or prevention of trafficking; and
- broad-based law enforcement or developmental initiatives.

A Guide to the Tiers

Tier 1

Countries whose governments fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.

Tier 2

Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.

Tier 2 Watch List

Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards, and for which:

- the *estimated number* of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing and the country is not taking proportional concrete actions;
- there is a failure to provide evidence of *increasing efforts* to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year, including increased investigations, prosecutions, and convictions of trafficking crimes, increased assistance to victims, and decreasing evidence of complicity in severe forms of trafficking by government officials.

Tier 3

Countries whose governments do not fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so.

The TVPA, as amended, lists additional factors to determine whether a country should be on Tier 2 (or Tier 2 Watch List) versus Tier 3:

- the extent to which the country is a country of origin, transit, or destination for severe forms of trafficking;
- the extent to which the country's government does not meet the TVPA's minimum standards and, in particular, the extent to which officials or government employees have been complicit in severe forms of trafficking;
- reasonable measures that the government would need to undertake to be in compliance with the minimum standards in light of the government's resources and capabilities to address and eliminate severe forms of trafficking in persons;
- the extent to which the government is devoting sufficient budgetary resources to investigate and prosecute human trafficking, convict and sentence traffickers; and obtain restitution for victims of human trafficking; and
- the extent to which the government is devoting sufficient budgetary resources to protect victims and prevent the crime from occurring.

In addition, the TVPA directs the Secretary of State to consider, as proof of a country's failure to make significant efforts to fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards, a government policy or pattern of: human trafficking; human

trafficking in government-funded programs; forced labor (in government-affiliated medical services, agriculture, forestry, mining, construction, or other sectors); sexual slavery in government camps, compounds, or outposts; or employing or recruiting child soldiers.

The TVPA also provides that any country that has been ranked Tier 2 Watch List for two consecutive years and that would otherwise be ranked Tier 2 Watch List for the next year will instead be ranked Tier 3 in that third year. The Secretary of State is authorized to waive the automatic downgrade only once, in that third year, based on credible evidence that a waiver is justified because the government has a written plan that, if implemented, would constitute making significant efforts to meet the TVPA's minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is devoting sufficient resources to implement the plan. The following year, a country must either go up to Tier 2 or down to Tier 3. Additionally, the TVPA limits a country to one year on Tier 2 Watch List after that country received a waiver to stay on Tier 2 Watch List and was subsequently downgraded to Tier 3.

Funding Restrictions for Tier 3 Countries

Pursuant to the TVPA, governments of countries on Tier 3 may be subject to certain restrictions on foreign assistance, whereby the President may determine not to provide U.S. government nonhumanitarian, nontrade-related foreign assistance as defined in the TVPA. In addition, the President may determine to withhold funding for government official or employee participation in educational and cultural exchange programs in the case of certain Tier 3 countries. Consistent with the TVPA, the President may also determine to instruct the U.S. Executive Director of each multilateral development bank and the International Monetary Fund to vote against and use their best efforts to deny any loans or other uses of the institutions' funds to a designated Tier 3 country for most purposes (except for humanitarian, trade-related, and certain development-related assistance). Alternatively, the President may waive application of the foregoing restrictions upon a determination that the provision to a Tier 3 country of such assistance would promote the purposes of the TVPA or is otherwise in the national interest of the United States. The TVPA also authorizes the President to waive these restrictions if necessary to avoid significant adverse effects on vulnerable populations, including women and girls, and children.

Applicable assistance restrictions apply for the next Fiscal Year, which begins October 1, 2024.

TVPA Minimum Standards for the Elimination of Trafficking in Persons

Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, Div. A of Pub. L. No. 106-386, § 108, as amended.

1. The government of the country should prohibit severe forms of trafficking in persons and punish acts of such trafficking.
2. For the knowing commission of any act of sex trafficking involving force, fraud, coercion, or in which the victim of sex trafficking is a child incapable of giving meaningful consent, or of trafficking which includes rape or kidnapping or which causes a death, the government of the country should prescribe punishment commensurate with that for grave crimes, such as forcible sexual assault.
3. For the knowing commission of any act of a severe form of trafficking in persons, the government of the country should prescribe punishment that is sufficiently stringent to deter and that adequately reflects the heinous nature of the offense.
4. The government of the country should make serious and sustained efforts to eliminate severe forms of trafficking in persons.

Indicia of "Serious and Sustained Efforts"

1. Whether the government of the country vigorously investigates and prosecutes acts of severe forms of trafficking in persons, and convicts and sentences persons responsible for such acts, that take place wholly or partly within the territory of the country, including, as appropriate, requiring incarceration of individuals convicted of such acts. For purposes of the preceding sentence, suspended or significantly reduced sentences for convictions of principal actors in cases of severe forms of trafficking in persons shall be considered, on a case-by-case basis, whether to be considered an indicator of serious and sustained efforts to eliminate severe forms of trafficking in persons. After reasonable requests from the Department of State for data regarding investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and sentences, a government which does not provide such data, consistent with a demonstrably increasing capacity of such government to obtain such data, shall be presumed not to have vigorously investigated, prosecuted, convicted or sentenced such acts.
2. Whether the government of the country protects victims of severe forms of trafficking in persons and encourages their assistance in the investigation and prosecution of such trafficking, including provisions for legal alternatives to their removal to countries in which they would face retribution or hardship, and ensures that victims are not inappropriately incarcerated, fined, or otherwise penalized solely for un-lawful acts as a direct result of being trafficked, including by providing training to law enforcement and immigration officials regarding the identification and treatment of trafficking victims using approaches that focus on the needs of the victims.
3. Whether the government of the country has adopted measures to prevent severe forms of trafficking in persons, such as measures to inform and educate the public, including potential victims, about the causes and consequences of severe forms of trafficking in persons, measures to establish the identity of local populations, including birth registration, citizenship, and nationality, measures to ensure that its nationals who are deployed abroad as part of a diplomatic, peacekeeping, or other similar mission do not engage in or facilitate severe forms of trafficking in persons or exploit victims of such trafficking, a transparent system for remediating or punishing such public officials as a deterrent, measures to pre-vent the use of forced labor or child labor in violation of international standards, effective bilateral, multilateral, or regional information sharing and cooperation arrangements with other countries, and effective policies or laws regulating foreign labor recruiters and holding them civilly and criminally liable for fraudulent recruiting.

4. Whether the government of the country cooperates with other governments in the investigation and prosecution of severe forms of trafficking in persons and has entered into bilateral, multilateral, or regional law enforcement cooperation and coordination arrangements with other countries.
5. Whether the government of the country extradites persons charged with acts of severe forms of trafficking in persons on substantially the same terms and to substantially the same extent as persons charged with other serious crimes (or, to the extent such extradition would be inconsistent with the laws of such country or with international agreements to which the country is a party, whether the government is taking all appropriate measures to modify or replace such laws and treaties so as to permit such extradition).
6. Whether the government of the country monitors immigration and emigration patterns for evidence of severe forms of trafficking in persons and whether law enforcement agencies of the country respond to any such evidence in a manner that is consistent with the vigorous investigation and prosecution of acts of such trafficking, as well as with the protection of human rights of victims and the internationally recognized human right to leave any country, including one's own, and to return to one's own country.
7. Whether the government of the country vigorously investigates, prosecutes, convicts, and sentences public officials, including diplomats and soldiers, who participate in or facilitate severe forms of trafficking in persons, including nationals of the country who are deployed abroad as part of a diplomatic, peacekeeping, or other similar mission who engage in or facilitate severe forms of trafficking in persons or exploit victims of such trafficking, and takes all appropriate measures against officials who condone or enable such trafficking. A government's failure to appropriately address public allegations against such public officials, especially once such officials have returned to their home countries, shall be considered inaction under these criteria. After reasonable requests from the Department of State for data regarding

Women carry crops. This photo was taken by a lived experience expert who is part of the Department of State s Human Trafficking Expert Consultant Network. They took this photo while delivering trauma informed trainings for anti trafficking stakeholders in Nepal.

such investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and sentences, a government which does not provide such data, consistent with a demonstrably increasing capacity of such government to obtain such data, shall be presumed not to have vigorously investigated, prosecuted, convicted, or sentenced such acts.

8. Whether the percentage of victims of severe forms of trafficking in the country that are non-citizens of such countries is insignificant.
9. Whether the government has entered into effective, transparent partnerships, cooperative arrangements, or agreements that have resulted in concrete and measurable outcomes with -
    a. domestic civil society organizations, private sector entities, or international nongovernmental organizations, or into multilateral or regional arrangements or agreements, to assist the government's efforts to prevent trafficking, protect victims, and punish traffickers; or
    b. the United States toward agreed goals and objectives in the collective fight against trafficking.
10. Whether the government of the country, consistent with the capacity of such government, systematically monitors its efforts to satisfy the criteria described in paragraphs (1) through (8) and makes available publicly a periodic assessment of such efforts.
11. Whether the government of the country achieves appreciable progress in eliminating severe forms of trafficking when compared to the assessment in the previous year.
12. Whether the government of the country has made serious and sustained efforts to reduce the demand for –
    a. commercial sex acts; and
    b. participation in international sex tourism by nationals of the country.

Countries in the 2024 TIP Report that are not Party to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking In Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

Congo, Republic of the

Iran

Korea, Democratic People's Republic of

Marshall Islands

Papua New Guinea

Solomon Islands

Somalia

South Sudan

Tonga

Vanuatu

Yemen

Between April 2023 and March 2024, Uganda became a State Party to the Protocol.

Global Law Enforcement Data

The 2003 reauthorization of the TVPA added to the original law a new requirement that foreign governments provide the Department of State with data on trafficking investigations, prosecutions, convictions, and sentences in order to fully meet the TVPA's minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking (Tier 1). The 2004 TIP Report collected this data for the first time. The 2007 TIP Report showed for the first time a breakout of the number of total prosecutions and convictions that related to labor trafficking, placed in parentheses.

Year	Prosecutions	Prosecutions – Labor Only	Convictions	Convictions – Labor Only	Victims Identified	Victims Identified – Labor Only	New or Amended Legislation
2017	17,471	869	7,135	332	96,960	23,906	5
2018	11,096	457	7,481	259	85,613	11,009	5
2019	11,841	1,024	9,548	498	118,932	13,875	7
2020	9,876	1,115	5,011	337	109,216	14,448	16
2021	10,572	1,379	5,260	374	90,354	21,219	15
2022	15,159	2,670	5,577	528	115,324	24,340	27
2023	18,774	3,684	7,115	1,256	133,948	42,098	14

The above statistics are estimates derived from data provided by foreign governments and other sources and reviewed by the Department of State. Aggregate data fluctuates from one year to the next due to the hidden nature of trafficking crimes, dynamic global events, shifts in government efforts, and a lack of uniformity in national reporting structures.

Now more than ever, anti trafficking stakeholders are incorporating survivor expertise and input at all stages of developing and implementing policies, procedures, and programs. Governments and organizations must ensure the application of a victim centered, trauma informed, and culturally competent approach; provide competitive compensation for survivors' expertise and be willing to dedicate resources to implement the changes recommended by survivor leaders.

2024 TIP Report Heroes

This year marks a major milestone—the 20th anniversary of the TIP Report Heroes awards program. Each year, the Department of State honors individuals around the world who have devoted their lives to the fight against human trafficking. These individuals include NGO workers, lawmakers, government officials, survivors of human trafficking, and concerned citizens. They are recognized for their tireless efforts—despite some working in challenging environments where human trafficking concerns remain pervasive and facing resistance, opposition, or threats to their lives—to protect victims, punish offenders, and mitigate the underlying factors that cause vulnerabilities traffickers often target.

For more information about current and past TIP Report Heroes, please visit the TIP Report Heroes Global Network at www.tipheroes.org.

AL AMIN NOYON
BRAZIL

Md. Al-Amin, or Noyon, is a welcoming first face to trafficking survivors and migrants as they return to Bangladesh. As a fellow trafficking survivor, Noyon is uniquely qualified and motivated to help them rebuild their lives. In his capacity as manager of the BRAC Migration Welfare Centre onsite at the Dhaka airport, Noyon has supported more than 34,000 Bangladeshi trafficking survivors and migrants over the last 15 years.

Born to a family of modest means, Noyon's dream of a better life turned into a nightmare when he was exploited in trafficking in Malaysia in 2007, beaten, tortured, and held captive in the jungle. But as the 41-year-old now shares, that is not how his story ends. His motivation to support fellow survivors has long motivated him to serve as a member of ANIRBAN ('the flame that will not fade'), a trafficking support platform made up of survivors who raise awareness about human trafficking and advocate for survivors and their rights.

Noyon believes education is one of the best ways to insulate Bangladesh's next generation from the perils of human trafficking. He assists with safe migration campaigns at schools across Bangladesh and has supported thousands of students whose families are migrants or trafficking survivors secure academic scholarships.

Known by anti-trafficking stakeholders in the Bangladesh government, multilateral organizations, and likeminded partners, Noyon steadfastly supports others despite very real risks to his own safety.

MARCELA MARTINEZ
BOLIVIA

Ms. Martinez is an accomplished Bolivian lawyer from La Paz and a leading anti-trafficking activist, who has demonstrably changed the direction of Bolivian and regional efforts to combat trafficking in persons, providing hope for families affected by human trafficking in Bolivia.

In 2017, Ms. Martinez formed the Social Responsibility Area of her law firm, from which the #RedAlertTempranaZar hashtag operates. This hashtag is modeled after the Amber Alert system in the United States to help activate searches for victims in Bolivia. They also provide training, talks, workshops, and prevention webinars to schools, universities, neighborhood associations, and other civil society organizations. To date, more than 18,000 volunteers participate in the network and have helped authorities locate more than 150 victims.

Ms. Martinez's work has been instrumental in the prosecution of traffickers, protection of survivors, and prevention of victims. She helped draft and lobbied for the passage of the first comprehensive Bolivian national law that gives law enforcement and prosecutors new tools and resources to combat trafficking in persons. She also created the National Trafficking in Persons Council to coordinate all Bolivian government efforts to fight human trafficking.

She was part of the NinaSonko Heart of Fire Women's Circle, which provides support and holistic and business coaching to survivors of trafficking and violence and supports social reintegration. She has also served as a trainer through UNODC, training judges, prosecutors, and police officers on victim care at the national level. Through her tireless efforts, Ms. Martinez has reduced human trafficking in Bolivia.

MARIA WERLAU
BRAZIL

Free Society Project, also known as Cuba Archive, a non-profit think tank that defends human rights through information. She began in 2009 researching, documenting, and denouncing exploitation and forced labor in Cuba's labor export program and advocating for its victims and survivors. In 2010, she published her first academic work on the issue and authored an opinion piece in The Wall Street Journal denouncing the labor export program as a trafficking scheme benefiting the Cuban government. At the time, Cuba's "internationalism" was mostly known from the slanted narrative of altruistic solidarity.

Since then, Maria has interviewed dozens of Cuban workers, mostly doctors coerced to work across the globe. Through her work at Cuba Archive, she has exposed the dark aspects of Cuba's medical missions, emphasizing the abuses faced by the workers: violence, sexual harassment, family separation, exploitation, forced labor, wage confiscation, restriction of movement, passport retention, repression, forced exile, psychological trauma, loss of life, and more. She has also documented and exposed the labor export program's lesser-known impact on the public health systems of Cuba and host countries, as well as its economic, political, and geostrategic value to the Cuban regime.

Maria has authored numerous works on Cuba in English and Spanish, including on healthcare, and provided expert testimony on Cuban labor trafficking to the U.S. Congress and at the OAS and the European Parliament.

MUSTAFA RIDHA MUSTAFA AL-YASIRI
IRAQ

Brigadier General Mustafa Ridha Mustafa al-Yasiri has courageously worked in Iraq's Ministry of Interior (MOI) to combat trafficking in persons throughout a career dedicated to defending Iraq's most vulnerable. Brigadier General Mustafa vastly improved the Government of Iraq's efforts to combat trafficking in persons and enhanced services for women trafficking victims, only months after being appointed in March 2023 as the Director of MOI's Anti-Human Trafficking Directorate. With support from the Minister of Interior, Brigadier General Mustafa immediately increased government resources dedicated to fighting trafficking in persons; appointed women Trafficking in Persons officers and employees to better assist trafficking victims; and appointed new investigative officers and officials knowledgeable on trafficking in persons, victim identification, and violence against women. Together with the Iraqi judiciary, Mustafa established a strategy to identify victims more accurately and better address sexual exploitation and other forms of trafficking.

In addition, Brigadier General Mustafa worked with hiring companies to ensure they publish and display signs detailing Iraqi workers' rights and the MOI's Trafficking in Persons hotline. On a weekly basis, he visited shelters to speak with victims, compile lists of needed food and hygienic and medical supplies, and help victims make calls to their families. He also personally accompanied trafficking victims to court to help with their hearings and legal procedures. Every day, motivated by personal conviction, Brigadier General Mustafa is realizing a professional goal to serve and protect many of the most vulnerable citizens of Iraq.

EDITH MUROGO
KENYA

Edith Murogo is a beacon of hope on the frontlines of the fight against human trafficking and labor exploitation. When Edith started training domestic workers more than two decades ago, she met victims of human trafficking and gender-based violence. This experience prompted her to pioneer initiatives that transformed anti-trafficking efforts in Kenya.

After establishing the Centre for Domestic Training and Development (CDTD) in 2001, Edith became a leading advocate for domestic workers' rights and lobbied the government for strengthened protections of migrant workers. Edith initiated training to professionalize domestic workers and convinced the government to develop the curriculum and establish a certificate program for domestic workers seeking employment abroad. Since opening, CDTD has assisted over 50,000 domestic workers with advocacy, skills, and knowledge to prevent them from becoming victims of trafficking.

In 2012, Edith opened the Talia Agler Girls Shelter (TAGS) - a safe house providing comprehensive assistance to girls and young women, especially for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence exploited in human trafficking. TAGS has assisted over 1,000 girls with removal from trafficking situations, recovery, and reintegration support services as well as education, mentorship, and leadership opportunities

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Edith established Kenya's National Shelters Network to coordinate shelter services across Kenya and ensure all survivors receive crucial protection services. Edith is a tireless advocate working with government and civil society to strengthen anti-trafficking laws and responses. The Department of Labor and BBC have highlighted her work in several documentaries about human trafficking.

OUMOU ELKHAIROU NIARÉ SAMAKÉ
MALI

Oumou Elkhairou Niaré Samaké (Oumou), a well-known Malian magistrate, currently serves as the coordinator of Mali's National Integrated Program for the Fight against Drug Trafficking and Organized Crime (PNIL) and as Coordinator of the National Committee for the Fight Against Trafficking in Persons and Similar Practices (CNLTPPA). Oumou is a fierce advocate for human rights, gender-based violence, and trafficking in persons issues. She has spearheaded Mali's recent adoption of a new Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons; championed the development of Mali's new draft penal code to criminalize trafficking in persons; and fought to increase prosecutions over the past year of hereditary slavery cases.

In 2020 and 2021, the Trafficking in Persons Committee became relatively inactive. However, upon her appointment in 2022, Oumou reinvigorated Mali's anti-trafficking efforts. First, she reestablished regular coordination meetings and published the Trafficking in Persons Committee's overdue 2021 and 2022 annual reports. Next, she spearheaded the development, drafting, and adoption of Mali's new National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in persons, launched in October 2023. She has maintained high level standard of contacts with partners, donors, and national and international stakeholders in the fight against trafficking in persons and hereditary slavery.

SAMSON INOCENCIO JR.
PHILIPPINES

Samson “Sam” Inocencio has dedicated over 20 years to combating trafficking in persons through his work with the International Justice Mission (IJM) Philippines. He has contributed to 147 convictions for commercial sexual exploitation and 220 for online sexual exploitation (OSEC) crimes since 2005. After becoming National Director of IJM in 2016, Sam assisted in the removal of 544 children from situations of commercial sexual exploitation and 1,237 children who were at risk of OSEC.

Sam led IJM’s efforts under the U.S.-Philippine Child Protection Compact (CPC) Partnership to combat OSEC crimes and advocated for a 347 percent budget increase for the Philippine National Police - Women and Children Protection Center. As IJM’s representative to the Government of the Philippines’ Interagency Council Against Trafficking, Sam has assisted the Philippines in its efforts to combat the commercial sexual exploitation of children and OSEC related crimes, to hold offenders accountable in courts of law, and to safeguard Filipino children.

He collaborated with the Government of the Philippines in 2016 to develop a “roadmap to Tier 1” in the U.S. Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report. The Philippines has been ranked Tier 1 for eight years due to the merits of its efforts. Sam’s leadership and dedicated service have strengthened the government and civil society’s response to trafficking and protected thousands, especially children, from exploitation.

MARIJANA SAVIĆ
SERBIA

Marijana Savić, the founder and director of NGO Atina, is an activist dedicated to advancing women’s and girls’ rights. For over two decades, she has provided vital support and recovery programs for survivors of trafficking and gender-based violence in Serbia. Her efforts have led to important progress in policy reform to combat human trafficking and support women and girls, who were victims of commercial sexual exploitation.

Under Marijana’s guidance, Atina has become a pivotal organization in Serbia’s anti-trafficking sector. Marijana also actively contributes by helping integrates survivor experiences into law and human rights policies, in Serbia and abroad. Her commitment extends to economic empowerment through the social enterprise Bagel Bejgl, which she founded in 2015. This initiative – which provides employment to trafficking survivors – supports Atina’s sustainability by directing its profits to anti-trafficking programming.

Marijana works with international bodies, including the Council of Europe, as an expert in combating trafficking, especially labor exploitation. An alumnus of the Human Rights Advocates Program at Columbia University, Marijana is also involved in global advocacy as a member of the Global Fund for Children’s board, Canada’s Equality Fund Investment Advisory Council, and the UN Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking board.

Marijana’s relentless activism and leadership have earned widespread acclaim and numerous awards for Atina, highlighting her role in shaping a safer, more equitable society for women and girls across Serbia and globally. Her work exemplifies a profound commitment to human rights and the empowerment of the most vulnerable groups.

ROSA CENDÓN
CATALONIA

Rosa Cendón has devoted her life to assisting victims, raising awareness, and combating human trafficking in Spain.

As a social worker and educator based in Barcelona, Rosa has led advocacy and institutional relations for SICARcat, the largest anti-trafficking NGO in the Catalonia region, for 20 years. SICARcat offers assistance to women and children survivors of trafficking by providing them with shelter and legal, psychological, medical, and social support. Since 2022, Rosa has served as an expert advisor for combating human trafficking and gender-based violence at the Catalonia regional Ministry of Equality and Feminism. She continues to promote change by raising awareness of human trafficking and designing public policy.

Rosa is at the forefront of anti-trafficking efforts in Catalonia. Her victim-centered approach has influenced regional and national anti-trafficking and victim protection policies. She contributed to designing the regional Catalonian and Barcelona city protocols for victim protection. Under her leadership, SICARcat developed tools for the detection and intervention of human trafficking cases working closely with law enforcement agencies. She regularly conducts specialized training for key actors.

During the height of the European migration crisis, Rosa helped found the ASIL.CAT network of human rights NGOs that coordinated shelter, protection, and services for the influx of refugees. She worked to ensure that anti-trafficking efforts were included in the asylum reception system. As a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Spain has received over 200,000 Ukrainian refugees and Rosa has been at the forefront in providing support to the refugees arriving to Barcelona.

LETITIA PINAS
SURINAME

Inspector Letitia Pinas launched her career with the Suriname Police Force in 1998. After serving in the Youth Affairs Department and the Public Relations Department, she was assigned the role of Acting Head of the 14-person Trafficking in Persons Unit in November 2020, to determine its continued usefulness. Inspector Pinas overhauled the underperforming unit by drafting a strategic plan that improved the unit's ability to investigate suspects and identify and serve victims, its presence in and outreach to the community, and the public's trust in it.

With no NGOs working on human trafficking, Inspector Pinas assumed a disproportionate burden not only to investigate cases properly and effectively but also ensured efforts continued in the areas of protection and prevention, including expanded awareness. Despite the government facing a multi-year financial crisis, she successfully lobbied for funds from the police to establish an emergency shelter within her office to house victims in the initial stages of an investigation. She closely collaborated with the Prosecutors' Office for funding to create a long-term shelter for both male and female victims. Through improved collaboration with the Maritime Police and the Military Police, the Trafficking in Persons Unit actively participates in inspections of incoming vessels, while also checking for potential victims amongst incoming travelers at the airport. These efforts have led to increased numbers of identified victims, including many who have trusted the police enough to self-report. Her collaboration with senior police officials resulted in the development of a website that raises awareness on human trafficking and provides society with a tool to anonymously report suspected cases of trafficking.

Tier Placements and Regional Maps

Tier 1

Argentina
Australia
Austria
Bahamas, The
Bahrain
Belgium
Canada
Chile
Colombia
Cyprus
Czech Republic (Czechia)
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Guyana
Iceland
Korea, Republic of
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Netherlands, The
Philippines
Poland
Seychelles
Singapore
Spain
Suriname
Sweden
Taiwan
United Kingdom
United States of America

Tier 2

Albania
Angola
Antigua and Barbuda
Armenia
Aruba
Azerbaijan
Bangladesh
Barbados
Belize
Bhutan
Bolivia
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Botswana
Brazil
Bulgaria
Burundi
Cabo Verde
Cameroon
Comoros
Congo, Democratic Republic of
Costa Rica
Cote d'Ivoire
Croatia
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Eswatini
Ethiopia
Gambia, The
Ghana
Greece
Guatemala
Guinea
Honduras
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Iraq
Ireland
Israel
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kazakhstan
Kenya
Kosovo
Latvia
Lesotho
Malawi
Malaysia
Mauritania
Mauritius
Mexico
Micronesia, Federated States of
Moldova
Mongolia
Montenegro
Morocco
Mozambique
Namibia
New Zealand
Nigeria
North Macedonia
Norway
Oman
Pakistan
Palau
Panama
Paraguay
Peru
Portugal
Qatar
Romania
Saudi Arabia
St. Lucia
St. Vincent and the Grenadines
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Slovakia
Slovenia
South Africa
Sri Lanka
Switzerland
Tanzania
Thailand
Timor-Leste
Togo
Tonga
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey (Türkiye)
Uganda
Ukraine
United Arab Emirates
Uzbekistan
Vietnam
Zambia

Tier 2 Watch List

Algeria
Benin
Burkina Faso
Central African Republic
Chad
Congo, Republic of
Curaçao
Dominican Republic
Equatorial Guinea
Fiji
Gabon
Guinea-Bissau
Hong Kong
Kuwait
Kyrgyzstan
Laos
Lebanon
Liberia
Madagascar
Maldives
Mali
Malta
Marshall Islands
Nepal
Niger
Rwanda
Serbia
Solomon Islands
Tajikistan
Uruguay
Vanuatu
Zimbabwe

Tier 3

Afghanistan
Belarus
Brunei
Burma
Cambodia
China
Cuba
Djibouti
Eritrea
Iran
Korea, Democratic People's Republic of
Macau
Nicaragua
Papua New Guinea
Russia
South Sudan
Sint Maarten
Sudan
Syria
Turkmenistan
Venezuela

Special Case

Haiti
Libya
Somalia
Yemen

Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.

Africa

Tier Placements

Tier 1	Tier 2			Tier 2 Watch List		Tier 3	Special Case
Seychelles	Angola	Ethiopia	Namibia	Benin	Guinea-Bissau	Djibouti	Somalia
	Botswana	Gambia, The	Nigeria	Burkina Faso	Liberia	Eritrea	
	Burundi	Ghana	Senegal	Central African Republic	Madagascar	South Sudan	
	Cabo Verde	Guinea	Sierra Leone	Chad	Mali	Sudan	
	Cameroon	Kenya	South Africa	Congo, Republic of the	Niger		
	Comoros	Lesotho	Tanzania	Equatorial Guinea	Rwanda		
	Congo, Democratic Republic of the	Malawi	Togo	Gabon	Zimbabwe		
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mauritania	Uganda				
		Mauritius	Zambia				
		Mozambique					

Trafficking Numbers

Year	Total Prosecutions	Prosecutions – Labor Only	Total Convictions	Convictions – Labor Only	Total Victims Identified	Victims Identified – Labor Only	New or Amended Legislation
2017	1,325	98	551	34	26,517	5,902	2
2018	1,253	37	1,190	29	24,407	3,749	2
2019	955	71	2,122	32	42,517	1,284	2
2020	1,493	251	382	107	28,538	6,947	8
2021	1,686	265	659	68	11,450	3,643	3
2022	2,477	388	904	139	21,790	5,436	5
2023	2,551	460	758	200	21,877	8,148	2

The above statistics are estimates derived from data provided by foreign governments and other sources and reviewed by the Department of State. Aggregate data fluctuates from one year to the next due to the hidden nature of trafficking crimes, dynamic global events, shifts in government efforts, and a lack of uniformity in national reporting structures.

Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.

East Asia and the Pacific

Tier Placements

Tier 1	Tier 2		Tier 2 Watch List	Tier 3	Special Case
Australia	Indonesia	Palau	Fiji	Brunei	
Korea, Republic of	Japan	Thailand	Hong Kong S.A.R.	Burma	
Philippines	Malaysia	Timor-Leste	Laos	Cambodia	
Singapore	Micronesia, Federated States of	Tonga	Marshall Islands	China	
Taiwan	Mongolia	Vietnam	Solomon Islands	Korea, Democratic People's Republic of	
	New Zealand		Vanuatu	Macau S.A.R.	
				Papua New Guinea	

Trafficking Numbers

Year	Total Prosecutions	Prosecutions – Labor Only	Total Convictions	Convictions – Labor Only	Total Victims Identified	Victims Identified – Labor Only	New or Amended Legislation
2017	2,949	77	3,227	72	4,915	669	0
2018	2,351	63	1,275	16	5,466	291	1
2019	3,276	86	3,662	20	14,132	7,687	2
2020	1,838	70	1,502	12	2,884	691	1
2021	1,440	73	1,066	60	3,348	859	0
2022	4,570	708	1,607	63	4,635	2,037	3
2023	3,390	398	1,802	97	6,543	1,161	2

The above statistics are estimates derived from data provided by foreign governments and other sources and reviewed by the Department of State. Aggregate data fluctuates from one year to the next due to the hidden nature of trafficking crimes, dynamic global events, shifts in government efforts, and a lack of uniformity in national reporting structures.

Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.

Europe

Tier Placements

Tier 1		Tier 2			Tier 2 Watch List	Tier 3	Special Case
Belgium	Iceland	Albania	Ireland	Romania	Malta	Belarus	
Cyprus	Lithuania	Armenia	Italy	Slovakia	Serbia	Russia	
Czechia	Luxembourg	Austria	Kosovo	Slovenia			
Denmark	Netherlands	Azerbaijan	Latvia	Switzerland			
Estonia	Poland	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Moldova	Turkey (Türkiye)			
Finland	Spain	Bulgaria	Montenegro	Ukraine			
France	Sweden	Croatia	North Macedonia				
Georgia	United Kingdom	Greece	Norway				
Germany		Hungary	Portugal				

Trafficking Numbers

Year	Total Prosecutions	Prosecutions – Labor Only	Total Convictions	Convictions – Labor Only	Total Victims Identified	Victims Identified – Labor Only	New or Amended Legislation
2017	2,548	179	1,257	53	12,750	3,330	0
2018	2,394	234	1,379	80	16,838	2,675	1
2019	2,896	106	1,346	41	17,383	1,369	2
2020	2,355	101	1,291	33	18,173	1,082	2
2021	3,285	86	1,905	92	21,347	2,124	5
2022	2,932	169	1,668	67	24,528	2,497	6
2023	3,147	201	1,667	93	32,996	4,448	4

The above statistics are estimates derived from data provided by foreign governments and other sources and reviewed by the Department of State. Aggregate data fluctuates from one year to the next due to the hidden nature of trafficking crimes, dynamic global events, shifts in government efforts, and a lack of uniformity in national reporting structures.

Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.

Near East

Tier Placements

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 2 Watch List	Tier 3	Special Case
Bahrain	Egypt	Algeria	Iran	Libya
	Iraq	Kuwait	Syria	Yemen
	Israel	Lebanon		
	Jordan			
	Morocco			
	Oman			
	Qatar			
	Saudi Arabia			
	Tunisia			
	United Arab Emirates			

Trafficking Numbers

Year	Total Prosecutions	Prosecutions – Labor Only	Total Convictions	Convictions – Labor Only	Total Victims Identified	Victims Identified – Labor Only	New or Amended Legislation
2017	974	112	104	11	1,834	53	0
2018	738	10	155	7	2,675	83	0
2019	788	44	419	22	3,619	35	0
2020	533	106	414	84	3,461	1,827	0
2021	869	356	353	88	3,440	1,127	1
2022	644	173	545	85	2,980	1,790	0
2023	2,258	1,344	770	390	3,450	1,596	2

The above statistics are estimates derived from data provided by foreign governments and other sources and reviewed by the Department of State. Aggregate data fluctuates from one year to the next due to the hidden nature of trafficking crimes, dynamic global events, shifts in government efforts, and a lack of uniformity in national reporting structures.

Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.

South and Central Asia

Tier Placements

Tier 1	Tier 2		Tier 2 Watch List	Tier 3	Special Case
	Bangladesh	Pakistan	Kyrgyzstan	Afghanistan	
	Bhutan	Sri Lanka	Maldives	Turkmenistan	
	India	Uzbekistan	Nepal		
	Kazakhstan		Tajikistan		

Trafficking Numbers

Year	Total Prosecutions	Prosecutions – Labor Only	Total Convictions	Convictions – Labor Only	Total Victims Identified	Victims Identified – Labor Only	New or Amended Legislation
2017	8,105	264	1,063	48	40,857	11,813	2
2018	3,102	41	2,465	9	24,544	1,841	1
2019	2,602	616	1,156	349	28,929	3,227	1
2020	2,747	532	834	74	45,060	3,275	3
2021	1,910	479	438	17	38,426	12,426	2
2022	3,304	1,118	597	104	49,715	11,161	1
2023	6,041	1,101	1,245	368	50,815	23,089	0

The above statistics are estimates derived from data provided by foreign governments and other sources and reviewed by the Department of State. Aggregate data fluctuates from one year to the next due to the hidden nature of trafficking crimes, dynamic global events, shifts in government efforts, and a lack of uniformity in national reporting structures.

Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.

Western Hemisphere

Tier Placements

Tier 1	Tier 2		Tier 2 Watch List	Tier 3	Special Case
Argentina	Antigua and Barbuda	Honduras	Curaçao	Cuba	Haiti
Bahamas, The	Aruba	Jamaica	Dominican Republic	Nicaragua	
Canada	Barbados	Mexico	Uruguay	Sint Maarten	
Chile	Belize	Panama		Venezuela	
Colombia	Bolivia	Paraguay			
Guyana	Brazil	Peru			
Suriname	Costa Rica	St. Lucia			
United States of America	Ecuador	St. Vincent and the Grenadines			
	El Salvador	Trinidad and Tobago			
	Guatemala				

Trafficking Numbers

Year	Total Prosecutions	Prosecutions – Labor Only	Total Convictions	Convictions – Labor Only	Total Victims Identified	Victims Identified – Labor Only	New or Amended Legislation
2017	8,105	264	1,063	48	40,857	11,813	2
2018	3,102	41	2,465	9	24,544	1,841	1
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2021	1,910	479	438	17	38,426	12,426	2
2022	3,304	1,118	597	104	49,715	11,161	1
2023	6,041	1,101	1,245	368	50,815	23,089	0

The above statistics are estimates derived from data provided by foreign governments and other sources and reviewed by the Department of State. Aggregate data fluctuates from one year to the next due to the hidden nature of trafficking crimes, dynamic global events, shifts in government efforts, and a lack of uniformity in national reporting structures.

Stopping Human Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) by International Peacekeepers and Civilian Personnel

This section summarizes actions taken by the United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to prevent trafficking in persons or the exploitation of victims of trafficking during calendar year 2023.

Actions	United Nations	OSCE	NATO
Total Number of Peacekeeping and Support Personnel	63,170	2,264	4,477
Total Number of Missions	11	14	2
Prevention Policy	"Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse" (2003)	Code of Conduct for Staff and Mission Members" "Staff Instruction No. 33/2023: Whistleblowing and Protection against Retaliation" (adopted 3 October 2023) "Staff Instructions No. 0032/2022: Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse" (adopted 20 June 2022) "Staff Instruction No. 11/2004: Preventing the Promotion/Facilitation of Trafficking in Human Beings" (adopted 22 January 2004)	Human Security Unit (political) International Military Staff – Gender Advisor (Military Advice) Heads of NATO Military Bodies (e.g. SACEUR, SACT)
Lead Office Responsible for Implementation	The Conduct and Discipline Service (CDS) The Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)	Secretary General Department of Human Resources Office of Internal Oversight	For preventing human trafficking, onflict-related sexual violence and SEA, training is done via pre-deployment and during any missions or operations. Nations are responsible for the provision of pre-deployment training of their personnel in accordance with NATO standards. Heads of NATO Bodies are responsible for providing training to their personnel.
Prevention Training	Pre-deployment and at mission, including an e-learning program	Pre-deployment OSCE Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) mandatory online training launched in October 2023. Introductory workshop for the PSEA Focal Points held on 15 September 2023.	None reported

Actions	United Nations	OSCE	NATO
Number of Allegations in 2023	101 allegations were made against military, police, and civilian personnel. Ninety percent of the allegations were in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. This is only the second time in the past 10 years that 100 or more allegations were recorded in one year. 22 of the allegations affected children.	The OSCE Department for Human Resources had no record of any reported allegations of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse in 2023. The OSCE Office of Internal Oversight did not receive any allegations of SEA in 2023.	No reported allegations – NATO relies on contributing countries to report allegations.
New Initiatives	UNHCR is piloting its participation in the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme (MDS), which facilitates the sharing of misconduct data between employers and prevents the rehiring of perpetrators across NGOs and other participating agencies. UNHCR uses MDS as a complement to its use of ClearCheck. UNOPS planned to pilot its participation in MDS in early 2024. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 77/278, the Secretariat is exploring "whether ClearCheck database and the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme can complement each other." The World Food Program (WFP) and IOM are developing a multilingual multimedia package of accessible information on protection from SEA for beneficiaries. In 2023, the UN Secretariat piloted a reinforcement training package for uniformed commanders, in cooperation with Member States. It provides targeted training support for commanders on conduct and discipline, with a focus on the prohibition of SEA. The package will be rolled out in 2024.	The OSCE appointed PSEA focal points in April 2023 to raise awareness of Staff Instruction 32 and provide guidance on how to prevent and respond to incidents. In May 2023, the OSCE revised its contractual arrangements with external providers, including the General Conditions of Contract for both goods and services, as well as the standard Implementing Partner Agreement. These revisions now incorporate clauses mandating contractors to implement suitable measures for preventing and addressing SEA by their employees or any individuals engaged in providing services to the OSCE.	In July 2023, NATO adopted its new policy on combating trafficking in human beings. The aim of this new policy was to provide a coherent, consistent, and integrated political framework for NATO's role in combating trafficking in human beings. This policy applies to all NATO personnel in all Alliance operations, missions, and activities, wherever NATO operates, from peacetime to crisis and conflict, including stabilization and post-conflict, and should be considered within the broader framework policies and guidance within NATO, including the wider Human Security Approach and Guiding Principles. This Security Approach allows for a more comprehensive view of the human environment, consequently enhancing operational effectiveness and contributing to lasting peace and security. NATO Policy on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings
Links for Additional Information	Conduct in UN Field Missions	Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (CTHB) Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Labour Exploitation in Supply Chains - Guidance for OSCE Procurement Report Wrongdoing About OIO	Human Security

Relevant International Conventions

The chart below shows the Ratification, Accession (a), or Acceptance (A) of relevant international conventions for those countries that have ratified, acceded to, or accepted any such conventions between April 2023 and March 2024. A complete list that includes the status of all of the countries covered by the Trafficking in Persons Report is available at: International Conventions Relevant to Combating Trafficking in Persons

Country	UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (2000)	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000)	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (2000)	ILO Convention 29, Forced Labour (1930)	ILO Protocol to the 2014 of Forced Labour Convention	ILO Convention 105, Abolition of Forced Labour (1957)	ILO Convention 182, Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour (1999)	ILO Convention 189, Domestic Workers (2011)
Brunei-Darussalam	2020 (a)	2006	2016	2024	—	—	2008	—
Mexico	2003	2002	2002	1934	2024	1959	2000	2020
Seychelles	2004	2012	2010	1978	—	1978	1999	2024
Uganda	2024	2001	2002	1963	—	1963	2001	—

International, Regional, and Sub-Regional Organizations Combating Trafficking in Persons

For the 2024 Trafficking in Persons Report, the Framework Documents and other Relevant Guidance section has been consolidated to show only documents published during the reporting year: April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024. If you would like to review documents from previous years, please refer to the 2023 Trafficking in Persons Report.

Organizations and Selected Links of Interest	Framework Documents and other Relevant Guidance	Focal Points
United Nations (UN) United Nations (UN) **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) – Trafficking in Persons** United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) – Trafficking in Persons **United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights** United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) What We Do to Protect Human Rights and Anti-Trafficking In Persons Efforts **International Organization for Migration (IOM)** International Organization for Migration (IOM) **The Inter-agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons:** The Inter-agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons **High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development Goals** High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development Goals International Labour Organization (ILO) ILO - Research and Publications	Global progress report on Sustainable Development Goal 16 indicators: A wake-up call for action on peace, justice and inclusion (2023) UN General Assembly Resolution on Improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons (A/RES/78/228) (2023) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/78/119) (2023) HRC Resolution on Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children (A/HRC/RES/53/9) (2023) ICAT Calls for Accelerated Action by 2025 to Prevent and End Child Trafficking Joint Statement of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) on the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, 2023 From Evidence to Action: Twenty years of IOM child trafficking data to inform policy and programming | IOM Publications Platform (2023) Monitoring the Reintegration of Trafficking Survivors: Study and Toolkit | IOM Publications Platform (2023) IOM Strategic Plan 2024–2028 | IOM Publications Platform (2024)	UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery UN Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography

Organizations and Selected Links of Interest	Framework Documents and other Relevant Guidance	Focal Points
African Union (AU) African Union (AU)	Quarterly Newsletter on Migration and Mobility December 2022 | African Union (2023)	
Khartoum Process (EU/Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative) Khartoum Process (EU/Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative)	Khartoum Process Factsheet (2023) 4Ps Revisited Webinar Series - Reader (2024)	
Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)	ASEAN: 5th Policy Dialogue on Human Rights with the European Union takes place in Brussels - ASEAN Main Portal (2023) AICHR launches two training resources on trafficking in persons - ASEAN Main Portal (2023) Advanced Training Course - Facilitator's Guide Advanced training for frontline responders on gender sensitive and victim-centred approaches to working with victims of trafficking in persons - ASEAN Main Portal (2023) Advanced Training Course - Gender-sensitive and victim-centred approaches for frontliners Approaches to working with victims of trafficking in persons - ASEAN Main Portal (2023) 38th Meeting of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights - ASEAN Main Portal (2024)	ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting on Transnational Crime
Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process) Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime (Bali Process)	Protecting Migrant Workers in Indo-Pacific Supply Chains: A Good Practice Guide for Business and Bali Process Member States (2023) Trapped in Deceit: Responding to the Trafficking in Persons Fuelling the Expansion of Southeast Asia's Online Scam Centres (2023) Recovery and Reintegration of Trafficking Victims - A RSO and NEXUS Institute Practitioner Guide (2023) Updated Bali Process Toolkit for Inclusive Civil Registration (2023)	Bali Process Working Group on Trafficking in Persons
Colombo Process Colombo Process	No relevant Framework Documents or other Relevant Guidance were published during the reporting period.	
Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (in Russian only)	No relevant Framework Documents or other Relevant Guidance were published during the reporting period.	

Organizations and Selected Links of Interest	Framework Documents and other Relevant Guidance	Focal Points
Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT) Coordinated Mekong Ministerial Initiative against Trafficking (COMMIT)	No relevant Framework Documents or other Relevant Guidance were published during the reporting period.	United Nations Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons Regional COMMIT Task Force
Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)	Human trafficking: CBSS tool for diplomats presented at Geneva seminar on Ukraine crisis (2023) The European Forum against Human Trafficking for Forced Labour and Labour Exploitation (2023) CBSS Trains Latvian Consular Staff on Human Trafficking Aid (2024) FRAUD Project: Combatting Human Trafficking for Financial and Benefit Fraud (2024)	Task Force against Trafficking in Human Beings Expert Group on Children at Risk Task Force Against Trafficking in Human Beings
Council of Europe (COE) Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings HUDOC - GRETA The Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings Meetings	Questionnaire for the evaluation of the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by the Parties / Fourth evaluation round (GRETA(2023)11) (2023) Report of the 32nd Meeting of the Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2023) Non-Punishment of Victims/Survivors of Human Trafficking in Practice: A Case Study of the United Kingdom (2023) GRETA 13th General Report (2024) HELP Online Training Course - Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (2024) 15 years of anti-trafficking monitoring work: event on the occasion of GRETA's 50th plenary meeting (2024) GRETA triggers positive changes in the fight against human trafficking: Council of Europe celebrates 15 years of its monitoring work (2024)	Group of Experts on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) **Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)** Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS)	ECOWAS Trafficking in Persons Regional Conference (2023) ECOWAS Commission, European Union, and Germany, united for the 5th Steering Committee meeting of the "Organized Crime: West African Response to Trafficking (OCWAR-T) Project" (2023) ECOWAS in Collaboration with the Government of Sierra Leone to hold a Regional Conference to Chart ways for Deeper Cooperation to End Human Trafficking | Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (2023)	The ECOWAS Regional Network of National Focal Institutions Against Trafficking in Persons Plus Anti-Trafficking Unit

Organizations and Selected Links of Interest	Framework Documents and other Relevant Guidance	Focal Points
European Union (EU) European Union (EU)	10 Signs that Someone Might Be a Victim of Human Trafficking (Leaflet) (2024) Commission welcomes breakthrough political agreement on stronger rules to fight trafficking in human beings - European Commission (europa.eu) (2024)	EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator EU Network of National Rapporteurs and Equivalent Mechanisms EU Civil Society Platform against Trafficking in Human Beings Coordination Group of the EU agencies working against trafficking in human beings
Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Financial Action Task Force (FATF)	The FATF Recommendations (updated in 2023) Joint Summary of Meeting Outcomes (2024) FATF Annual Report 2022-2023 (2024)	
League of Arab States (LAS) League of Arab States (LAS	Regional Guidelines for the Inclusion of Survivor of Trafficking in Persons in the Americas (2023) Fifty-Third Regular Session - Resolutions and Declarations Volume I (2023) Third Work Plan for a Comprehensive Response to Trafficking in Persons in the Western Hemisphere (2024) Recommendations of the Seventh Meeting of National Authorities on Trafficking in Persons on priorities to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and assistance and protection of victims (2024)	
Organization of American States (OAS) Organization of American States (OAS)	Regional Guidelines for the Inclusion of Survivor of Trafficking in Persons in the Americas (2023) Fifty-Third Regular Session - Resolutions and Declarations Volume I (2023) Third Work Plan for a Comprehensive Response to Trafficking in Persons in the Western Hemisphere (2024) Recommendations of the Seventh Meeting of National Authorities on Trafficking in Persons on priorities to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and assistance and protection of victims (2024)	Department of Public Security and Department against Transnational Organized Crime
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)	Business Handbook on Due Diligence in the Cocoa Sector: Addressing Child Labour and Forced Labour | en | OECD (2023) OECD Forum on Due Diligence in the Garment and Footwear Sector - OECD (2024) Review of G7 Government-led Voluntary and Mandatory Due Diligence Measures for Sustainable Agri-food Supply Chains | OECD iLibrary (2024)	OECD Task Force on Countering Illicit Trade
Organization for Islamic Cooperation Organization for Islamic Cooperation	No relevant Framework Documents or other Relevant Guidance were published during the reporting period.	

Organizations and Selected Links of Interest	Framework Documents and other Relevant Guidance	Focal Points
Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) **OSCE Alliance against Trafficking in Persons:** OSCE Alliance against Trafficking in Persons	The role of public procurement in preventing trafficking for labour exploitation in supply chains and advancing human rights (2023) Guidance on Trauma-Informed National Referral Mechanisms and Responses to Human Trafficking (2023) Modernizing National Action Plans to Strengthen States' Anti-trafficking Efforts (2023) OSCE hosts roundtable on preventing sexual exploitation in the context of major sporting events (2023) OSCE leaders call for renewed, victim-centred, efforts to stop human trafficking | OSCE (2023) Modernizing National Action Plans to Strengthen States' Anti-trafficking Efforts | OSCE (2023) OSCE Mission to Montenegro supports police officers in fighting human trafficking (2024) OSCE recognizes first ever hackathon against human trafficking in Albania (2024) Addressing trafficking in human beings related to the humanitarian crisis stemming from the war against Ukraine- Code of conduct for first line responders (2024) Protecting People Fleeing Ukraine: A Compendium of Anti-Trafficking Courses for First Line Responders (2024)	Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council
Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) (Puebla Group) Regional Conference on Migration (RCM) (Puebla Group)	No relevant Framework Documents or other Relevant Guidance were published during the reporting period.	The Liaison Officers Network to Combat Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons
Southern African Development Community (SADC) Southern African Development Community (SADC)	SADC convene a meeting to discuss data collection in the region | SADC (2023) SADC and EU reaffirm their commitment towards safeguarding peace and security in the SADC Region | SADC (2023)	

Annual Report to Congress on the Use of Child Soldiers under Section 405(c) of the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008

This report is submitted in accordance with section 405(c) of the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008 (22 U.S.C. 2370c-2(c)) (CSPA). Section 1 lists the countries identified as being in violation of the standards under the CSPA in 2023. Section 2 provides a description and the amounts of assistance withheld pursuant to section 404(a) of the CSPA. Section 3 provides a list of waivers or exceptions exercised under the CSPA. Section 4 contains the justifications for such waivers. Section 5 provides a description and the amounts of assistance provided to countries pursuant to such waivers

Section 1. Countries in Violation of the Standards Under the CSPA in 2023.

The Secretary of State identified the following countries as having governmental armed forces, police, or other security forces or government-supported armed groups that recruited or used child soldiers within the meaning of section 404(a) of the CSPA during the reporting period of April 1, 2022 – March 31, 2023: Afghanistan, Burma, Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Egypt, Eritrea, Iran, Libya, Mali, Russia, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, Türkiye, Venezuela, and Yemen.

Section 2. Description and Amount of Assistance Withheld Pursuant to Section 404(a).

No security assistance subject to section 404(a) of the CSPA was planned to be provided to Afghanistan, Burma, Eritrea, Iran, Mali, Russia, Rwanda, South Sudan, Syria, or Venezuela in fiscal year (FY) 2024.

Section 3. List of Waivers or Exceptions Exercised under Section 404(a)

On September 15, 2023, the President determined that it is in the national interest of the United States to waive the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to Egypt; to waive, in part, the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to Türkiye for International Military Education and Training (IMET) and Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) assistance, issuance of direct commercial sales (DCS) licenses, and support provided pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 331 and 10 U.S.C. 333, to the extent that the CSPA would restrict such assistance or support; to waive, in part, the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to Libya and Somalia to allow for the provision of IMET and PKO assistance, and support provided pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 331 and 10 U.S.C. 333, to the extent that the CSPA would restrict such assistance or support; to waive, in part, the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to allow for the provision of IMET and PKO assistance and issuance of DCS licenses in connection with the reexport of transport aircraft, to the extent that the CSPA would restrict such assistance; to waive, in part, the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to the Central African Republic and Yemen to allow for the provision of IMET and PKO assistance, to the extent that the CSPA would restrict such assistance; and to waive the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA to allow for the issuance of DCS licenses related to other U.S. government assistance for the above countries and, with respect to the Russian Federation, solely for the issuance of DCS licenses in connection with the International Space Station (ISS). The President has further certified that the governments of the above countries are taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers.

Section 4. Justifications for Waivers and Exceptions.

Pursuant to section 404(c) of the Child Soldiers Prevention Act of 2008 (CSPA) (22 U.S.C. 2370c-1(c)), the President has determined that it is in the national interest of the United States to waive the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to Egypt; to waive, in part, the application of the prohibition with respect to the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Somalia, Türkiye, and Yemen, including to allow for the issuance of direct commercial sales (DCS) licenses related to other U.S. government assistance for these countries that is not subject to the prohibition in section 404(a); and, with respect to Russia, to waive, in part, the application of the prohibition solely for DCS licenses in connection with the International Space Station. The President has further certified that the governments of the above countries are taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers. The justification for this determination and certification with respect to each country is set forth in this Memorandum.

The Central African Republic (CAR)

The President has determined it is in the national interest of the United States to waive, in part, the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to CAR to allow for the provision of International Military Education and Training (IMET) and Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) assistance and has certified that the CAR Government (CARG) is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers.

Armed groups in CAR continue to threaten civilians and pose a longstanding risk to stability. The waiver for PKO and IMET assistance for CAR will support the professionalization of the military to better provide security to the people of CAR while respecting human rights and international humanitarian law (IHL). Additionally, IMET programming allows the United States to invest in CAR military officers to promote professional military education and foster relationships with foreign military personnel rooted in democratic values.

The CARG is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers through meaningful engagement with U.S. and UN officials in seeking assistance to eradicate trafficking in persons, including the recruitment or use of child soldiers by CAR security forces and armed groups. Recent efforts have included the adoption of a national plan to counter trafficking in children, government directives prohibiting the presence of children around military bases, and collaboration with the UN and implementing partners to reintegrate children affected by conflict.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

The President has determined it is in the national interest of the United States to waive, in part, the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to DRC to allow for the provision of IMET and PKO assistance and issuance of licenses for DCS in connection with the reexport of transport aircraft and has certified that the Government of the DRC (GDRC) is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers.

The proliferation of armed groups amidst ongoing conflict in eastern DRC continues to threaten security and stability for the people of the DRC. IMET and PKO assistance for the DRC enables the United States to continue professionalization efforts of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) by enhancing its capacity to provide security within its territory while respecting human rights and IHL. IMET and PKO assistance provide mechanisms to support security sector governance reforms and training in areas such as military justice, civil-military relations, respect for human rights and IHL, military engineering, and resource management and logistics, which enhance security and help make the FARDC a more transparent, accountable institution.

The GDRC is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers through sustained commitment to implement its 2012 Action Plan to end and prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers in partnership with the UN. Additionally, in 2022 the GDRC adopted a national strategy for the implementation of the Demobilization, Disarmament, Community Recovery and Stabilization Program, which signals an important step in prioritizing children affected by armed conflict, particularly in eastern DRC.

Egypt

The President has determined it is in the national interest of the United State to waive, in full, the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to Egypt and has certified that the Government of Egypt is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers.

Egypt is an important U.S. partner in counterterrorism, anti-trafficking, and regional security operations, which advance both U.S. and Egyptian security. The decades-long defense partnership is a pillar for regional stability and key to securing peace with Israel, supporting the Multinational Force and Observers missions, and enhancing security of the Suez Canal. Since 1978, the United States has provided more than $54 billion in military assistance for Egypt, which has contributed to Egypt's capabilities to protect and defend its land, air, and maritime borders and to confront an evolving terrorist threat, including in the Sinai Peninsula.

The Government of Egypt is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers, even as the scope and intensity of the counterterrorism fight in the Sinai continues to see a significant downturn; 2023 is on track to report the lowest levels of violence in the Sinai since the conflict began in 2011. The U.S. government is not aware of the Egyptian military, police, or other security forces recruiting or using child soldiers. Consistent with Egypt's domestic laws and its obligations under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, the Egyptian government effectively prohibits persons under the age of 18 from being forcibly recruited into the armed forces. The Government of Egypt provides critical influence in addressing the recruitment or use of child soldiers by tribal militias, and the U.S. government will continue to engage the Egyptian government regarding reports of recruitment of child soldiers by government-supported Sinai tribal forces.

Libya

The President has determined it is in the national interest of the United States to waive, in part, the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to Libya to allow for the provision of IMET and PKO assistance and DoD support provided pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 331 and 10 U.S.C. 333 and has certified that the Government of National Unity (GNU) in Libya is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers.

The U.S. government selected Libya as a priority country for implementation of the U.S. Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability. The Department of State further assesses that in Libya the most durable solution to the unlawful recruitment of child soldiers, including by GNU-aligned units and the self-styled Libyan National Army, is a negotiated political settlement that ends Libya's instability and the cycles of conflict. IMET assistance will facilitate English language proficiency to improve interoperability and promote civil-military relations, including civilian control of a unified military. PKO assistance will build upon the October 2020 ceasefire and support U.N. efforts to advance Libya's transition to a unified, democratically elected, and inclusive political system based on respect for human rights. PKO provides the U.S. government a tool to support UNSMIL in its ceasefire monitoring function. Department of Defense support will build the capacity of Libyan military institutions in support of progress towards civilian-controlled, accountable, defense institutions that uphold human rights, combat terrorism, and address security challenges.

The GNU is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers through engagement with the UN and the U.S. government in the context of our recurring bilateral Security Dialogue. Through cooperation with UNSMIL, representatives of the Libyan 5+5 Joint Military Commission, comprised of senior military officers from both the east and west, engage with UNICEF on preventing child soldier recruitment. The U.S. government is not aware of the GNU's military, police, or other governmental security forces recruiting or using child soldiers. Further, GNU security sector leaders provide critical influence to prevent and end the recruitment or use of child soldiers by armed groups in Libya and mitigate the reliance on external forces or groups for internal security.

Russian Federation

The President has determined it is in the national interest of the United State to waive, in part, the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to the Russian Federation to allow for issuance of licenses for DCS solely in connection with the International Space Station (ISS) and has certified that the Government of the Russian Federation is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers.

It is in the U.S. national interest to work with Russia to maintain the safety of ISS operations. Maintaining longstanding U.S.-Russia ISS operations requires the ability to issue DCS licenses for defense articles and defense services in support of the ISS until the planned termination of its operation, which the National Aeronautics and Space Administration estimates will be in 2030. This waiver will allow such activities to continue and will enable the issuance of licenses necessary to support the safe operation of the ISS, U.S.-Russia integrated crew missions to the ISS, and the safety of U.S. and other personnel onboard the ISS.

The Russian Federation is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers. In accordance with the Russian Federation's Law on the Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict of 2008, the Government of the Russian Federation effectively prohibits persons under the age of 18 from being forcibly recruited into the armed forces.

Somalia

The President has determined it is in the national interest of the United States to waive, in part, the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to Somalia to allow for the provision of IMET and PKO assistance, and DoD support provided pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 331 and 10 U.S.C. 333 and has certified that the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers.

Foreign terrorist organizations including al-Shabaab continue to threaten security and stability for the people of Somalia. The waiver for IMET and PKO assistance for Somalia enables the United States to continue professionalization efforts of the Somali National Army (SNA) by enhancing their capacity to provide security within their territory while respecting human rights and IHL. Further, a waiver for support provided by the Department of Defense pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 331 and 10 U.S.C. 333 will allow for U.S. government assistance to build the Somali military's capacity to conduct effective, sustained counterterrorism operations against al-Shabaab and help reinforce U.S. values, including those related to preventing and ending the unlawful recruitment or use of child soldiers.

The FGS is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers through sustained commitment to implement its 2019 “road map” to accelerate progress on its 2012 Action Plan on ending the recruitment and use of children by the Somali National Armed Forces in partnership with the UN. The SNA’s Child Protection Unit continued to make progress in implementing screening procedures, training, and disseminating media to prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers. The FGS also continued implementation of standard operating procedures for the handover of children allegedly associated with armed groups.

Türkiye

The President has determined it is in the national interest of the United States to waive, in part, the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to Türkiye for IMET and PKO assistance, issuance of DCS licenses, and DoD support provided pursuant to 10 U.S.C. 331 and 10 U.S.C. 333 and has certified that the Government of Türkiye is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers.

Türkiye has been an important U.S. security partner and valued NATO Ally since 1952, regulating passage, in accordance with international law, through the straits of the Bosporus and the Dardanelles, which link the Black Sea with the Mediterranean. Further, Türkiye’s military capability and geographic location are vital to the United States’ integrated deterrence strategy and ability to respond to regional events including with respect to counterterrorism, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief operations. Türkiye’s support, including defense and security cooperation, to NATO Allies and partners deters malign influence in the region. This waiver will assist in maintaining NATO cohesion and continued interoperability, bolster regional security, and advance bilateral cooperation.

The Government of Türkiye is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers, including those present in elements of the Syrian National Army receiving support from the Government of Türkiye. The United States is not aware of the Turkish military, police, or other security forces recruiting or using child soldiers. Consistent with Türkiye’s domestic laws and its obligations under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, the Turkish military effectively prohibits persons under the age of 18 from being forcibly recruited into the armed forces. Further, the Government of Türkiye provides critical influence in addressing the problem of child soldiers with respect to the Syrian National Army.

Yemen

The President has determined that it is in the national interest of the United States to waive, in part, the application of the prohibition in section 404(a) of the CSPA with respect to Yemen to allow for provision of IMET and PKO assistance and has certified that the Government of the Republic of Yemen (ROYG) is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers.

It is in the U.S. national interest to support UN-led efforts to achieve an inclusive negotiated political resolution to the conflict in Yemen. The waiver for IMET assistance for Yemen enables the United States to continue to support professionalization and interoperability efforts of the Yemeni Armed Forces (YAF) by enhancing their capacity to provide inclusive security within their territory while respecting human rights and IHL. Further, this waiver will improve the YAF’s capacity to conduct effective, sustained counterterrorism operations, ensuring freedom of navigation through the Bab Al-Mandeb Strait, and securing the space for restoring effective governance institutions.

The ROYG is taking effective and continuing steps to address the problem of child soldiers through sustained commitment to implement its 2018 “road map” to accelerate progress on its 2014 Action Plan to end and prevent

the recruitment of children by Yemeni Armed Forces in partnership with the UN. The ROYG established child protection units within all military regions, issued directives banning child recruitment, and conducted numerous senior government field visits to monitor the implementation of screening procedures to prevent child recruitment and remove children from military units.

Section 5. Description and Amount of Assistance Provided Pursuant to a Waiver.

The information provided below only includes assistance obligated as of April 20, 2024. Additional assistance will be obligated during FY 2024.

Central African Republic
International Military Education Training *$101,124*
As of April 20, 2024, IMET funding was obligated for the following activity: professional military education and training.

Democratic Republic of the Congo
International Military Education Training *$177,238*
As of April 20, 2024, IMET funding was obligated for the following activity: professional military education and training.

Egypt
International Military Education Training *$1,352,782*
As of April 20, 2024, IMET funding was obligated for the following activity: professional military education and training.

Libya
International Military Education Training *$31,284*
As of April 20, 2024, IMET funding was obligated for the following activity: professional military education and training.

Somalia
Peacekeeping Operations *$31,917,530.44*
As of April 20, 2024, PKO funding was obligated for Somali National Army and Somali Ministry of Defense for the following activities: logistical support; advisory support; equipment; and program oversight.

10 U.S.C. 333 *$4,668,640.56*
As of April 20, 2024, 333 funding was obligated for the following activities: training and equipment.

Türkiye
International Military Education Training *$182,098*
As of April 20, 2024, IMET funding was obligated for the following activity: professional military education and training.

Yemen
International Military Education Training *$339,662*
As of April 20, 20, 2024, IMET funding was obligated for the following activity: professional military education and training.

A migrant worker works at a facility processing pineapples for export.

Glossary of Abbreviations

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
GBV	Gender Based Violence
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EU	European Union
EUROPOL	European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation
FARC	Revoluntionary Armed Forces of Colombia
GRETA	Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
IDP	Internally displaced person
ILO	International Labour Organization
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAP	National Action Plan
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
SOP	Standard Operatin Procedures
OAS	Organization of American States
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNODO	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UN TIP Protocol (Palermo Protocol)	Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime

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Notes: Local currencies have been converted to U.S. dollars ($) using the currency exchange rates reported by the U.S. Department of the Treasury on December 31, 2023.

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